DON JUAN DE LAS SIERRAS.



A ROMANCE.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

ON JUAN DE LAS SIERRAS,

OR,

EL EMPECINADO.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS LEFANU,

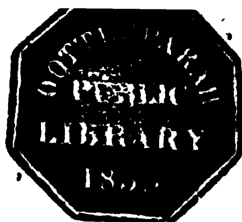
AUTHOR OF HELEN MONTEAGLE, LEOLIN ABBEY, STRATHALLAN, TALES OF A TOURIST, &c.

For time at last sets all things even;
And if we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong.

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DON JUAN DE LAS SIERRAS.

CHAPTER I.

'Tis done! the flame of hate no longer burns;
Nature relents, but, oh! too late returns!
Why does my soul this gush of fondness feel?
Trembling and faint, I drop the guilty steel!
Cold on my heart the hand of terror lies,
And shades of horror close my languid eyes!

CAMPBELL. *Love and Madness.*

WITH emotions they durst not communicate, the Conde Don Juan d'Avellana and Don Juan de las Sierras gazed on each other a few moments in silence.

As soon as the Conde recovered sufficient self-possession to go on with his narrative, he hurried to the conclusion—"The moment I saw her fall weltering in her blood—the mother of my guiltless babe, the beautiful flower that I had adored in its native purity, and thoughtlessly transplanted to the fatal sunshine of my greatness, I felt that the work of vengeance was but begun, and that the demons of remorse and despair had made me their own for ever. Seized with sudden madness, I commanded my domestics to cut their way through the crowd. They succeeded, for, with our plunder, the eagerness of the banditti had subsided.

"I found myself once more journeying towards Almarez, but could not divest myself of the idea I was pursued by relentless enemies, and continued to hurry on with frantic speed, though there was no one within sight.

"At

"At this period I recollected my Louisa—yes, Juan—in the moment of delirium my innocent babe had not had power to arrest my attention, and she was, perhaps, become the prey of savages even more cruel than her father. Execrating the folly of those around me who had not my excuse for their negligence, I eagerly commanded them to turn back. Harrowing as was the spectacle I anticipated, still nature prevailed in my bosom, and determined me, at all hazards not to lose a moment in trying to recover my child.

"The morning was just beginning to appear above the mountains—oh what a dawn was that to me, Las Sierras!—Sad is the morning that dawns on hopeless misery—but, oh, it is bliss compared to the first that arises upon the conscious perpetrator of guilt! With headlong speed we returned to the fatal spot. Ere we reached it, two of our horses

 had

had gasped and died—yet, would you credit me? but for a feeling of shame I would have again turned back—a deadly sickness overcame me as I thought of contemplating by day's garish light the ghastly victim of my last night's vengeance. The very air seemed heavy and oppressive—the soil from which balmy sweets are crushed by the innocent traveller appeared, to my perverted sense, filled with the odour of death—'In a few moments I shall see her!' I mentally exclaimed—'the form on which my eyes never gazed but with delight I shall behold a mangled corpse!'

"As the sun rose higher in the horizon, I put my hand before my eyes to exclude its unwelcome beams—thus I remained in artificial darkness till suddenly the carriage stopped. We had arrived at the place!—I must summon courage to view the scene. With the pulse of madness fast returning to my brain,

brain, I prepared to examine the fatal spot—to remove for honoured sepulture the remains of the wretched—the now unoffending Elvira—to rescue my babe. What do I say? all trace of the past had vanished! Some spots of blood upon the trampled ground—a few dwarfish shrubs that, as if they had been torn and crushed in the violence of the night encounter, shook their black and grotesque forms with an appearance of savage wildness and aridity, were all that remained to remind me of the persons—of the place—where deeds had been perpetrated engraved on my brain in letters of fire!

" Nature had shuddered at the prospect of approaching the spot where Elvira was seen to fall—yet now so great was the disappointment I expressed, you would have thought her corpse was a spectacle on which I had longed to feast my eyes. My servants could scarcely prevent me from seeking her—from de-

claring myself——But where do I wander? My daughter was what I sought, and she, by a just retribution, whether living or dead, had been cruelly conveyed away. Of just retribution I said; for, oh, Las Sierras, I have introduced you only to the threshold of my iniquities—when you hear of the wrongs of Rosaura—my innocent—my too-confiding sister—when you have penetrated to the extreme of my guilt——"

Las Sierras listened with redoubled attention, for he had often secretly wondered at, and longed to sympathize with the undeviating sorrow of Donna Rosaura. Her brother, after confiding to him the story of his own wrongs and sorrows, seemed just upon the point of trusting *this* secret also to him—but he was in error. The unremitting anguish of remorse might for a moment tempt Don Juan d'Avellana—or even the absence of mind occasioned by deep and gnawing

gnawing sorrow might induce him to allude to the secret that oppressed it; but his good sense instantly told him that it was against the interest he was trying to regain in his young pupil's heart to confide to him any thing beyond the wrongs it was absolutely necessary he should be informed of.

Recovering himself, therefore, with that self-possession and that air of stern dignity and composure which alike forbade interruption or inquiry, he rapidly concluded his story—"This double disappointment completed the fever that outraged love and honour had begun in my brain. In a helpless state I was conveyed to Almarez, where Rosaura——Rosaura—as I believe I already mentioned—attended and preserved my unvalued life with sister-like care—unvalued did I say?—No—I yet lived for one purpose—for revenge!—In vain the passionless monk Ordognez, crawling on

the cold flinty floor of the chapel that witnessed my deeply registered vow of eternal hatred, has embraced my knees, and, with sighs and tears at command, poured forth all the commonplaces of his religion, and besought me to retract a purpose elicited by wrongs whose bitterness he was unable to conceive. In vain, while they yet were fresh and I brooded at Almarez over the accomplishment of my wishes, he spurned me, unabsolved from his confessional, because I would not, like a coward, retract and deny with my lips the purpose engraved by the hand of hatred on my heart.

" Yet still one circumstance overwhelmed *that* heart with sadness— 'Time flies,' I said, 'and thou wilt grow old, Almarez, ere the destined opportunity presents itself. Lost as I was, I could not *again* stoop to the assassin's part." (The Conde d'Almarez paused

and

and gasped convulsively.) "It mattered not to me *who* reigned; my abhorrence was to the *blood*, and my rival or his representative must perish in mind, must wither in his fortunes—and I must—(an individual could do no more)—I must direct, and smile on the ruin, and aid the blow. What prospect was there of this? What probability of shaking the power of ages?

"And yet it has come to pass," exclaimed the Conde in a tone of triumph —"defying the calculations of reason—beyond my wildest wishes—that genius, that demon, born to reverse thrones and teach to astonished man the nothingness of greatness, arose, and my enemies were humbled to the earth. Then shall I not aid the blow? Every day, the claims of ancient greatness, the distinctions of feudal rank disappear, and those of merit rise in their place. My resolution is taken—to share in the goods the new

order of things proposes to bestow, and to lend my feeble aid to crush the engines of antiquated oppression.

"You, Las Sierras, are called upon equally by duty and by interest to second me. Shake off the inglorious bonds of love, artfully twined around you to bribe your interest in support of a falling cause—follow, second with your courage and youthful ardour the aim of your declining but kind, but friendly patron.

"Childless, broken-hearted, you shall be to me more than the son of my adoption—to you I will bequeath all my unfinished schemes of greatness. Mixed with the number of adventurers who, from a lower origin, have towered to fame and fortune, all shall be forgotten but your abilities and merit. Known only as the son of Almarez, there are no honours to which you may not aspire; and, invincible together, we will build

our greatness on the necks of tyrants and the fall of thrones!"

Though Don Juan de las Sierras had suspected, and more than suspected that all this was in the mind of the Conde d'Almarez, it did not prevent his beholding with a shudder this unveiled picture of his ambition, wickedness, and revenge.

Softer feelings made him reluctant to oppose an immediate denial to a proposal he viewed with unmixed abhorrence. He allowed the Conde time to pause, and then, anxious to turn the current of his thoughts, reverted to the fatal domestic story he had heard, and asked if no search or inquiry in the Serrania had been availing to recover the body of the mother, or the living child.

"Had it been possible," replied the Conde, "the zeal of Lopez during my long delirium would not have been discouraged. He made every effort—pro-

mised pardon and even reward to whosoever had secreted them—in vain. Cut off from the past and future, that black and dreadful night seems as if it had left no trace behind, save by the burning brand it has for ever fixed in my miserable breast.

"'Tis strange—'tis unaccountable—and sometimes, when I try to guess the truth, those dreadful thoughts recur that so long wrapped my senses in delirium. One thing is certain—my child cannot have lived and been brought up in the Serrania—the beauty—the native graces of Elvira's daughter must long since have betrayed her to some stranger's eye. But when I think what fate may have awaited her——

"Enough—the day of domestic anguish is past—that of public action is arrived. Las Sierras, I give you this night to consider of it—to-morrow I publicly pledge myself by those ties it

would

would be dishonour to think of breaking—*then*, you either follow my footsteps or break through every tie of faith and gratitude—I have already said it—either me or Gonsalez—there are no half measures. To-morrow prepare to follow me, or prefer the love and friendship of a few months to the accumulated benefits of seventeen years. Agree to support his power, or determine to plunge a dagger in your benefactor's heart."

With these words, the Conde closed the door upon Las Sierras; and left him to consider of the appalling alternative offered to his choice. Various and distressing were the reflections he made. On either side duty, honour, principle seemed to demand a sacrifice. Constantina! Gonsalez! names never to be heard without emotion—were they to be given up on a patron's arbitrary mandate? On the other hand, his obliga-

tions

tions to the house of Almarez, in formidable array presented themselves.

"But may I not eventually serve his cause," asked Caution, "by refusing to follow the Conde Don Juan d'Avellana in the headlong path to which his revenge and ambition prompt him? The righteous cause must eventually prevail; and then, what does he become unless some untried, some strenuous advocate exists for him on the patriot side? *Such* an advocate his grateful, though not blindly devoted Las Sierras would prove——But then in the meanwhile—to be accused by him, by his sister, of indifference—of preference to a stranger—to abandon Donna Rosaura (her gentle spirit already too much grieved by her brother's apprehended apostacy) to her fate!"

The night was more than half worn away and Don Juan had been unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion. The

The wasting light of his expiring lamp fell in a dubious and flickering way upon the different objects of painting and sculpture in the library, which seemed all selected with a view to favour the habitual melancholy of the Count. Don Juan's eyes rested mechanically upon a fine painting of Murillo's founded upon a disastrous story of the Eastern empire —Constans pursued by his brother Theodosius.*

The

* The Emperor Constans the Second, grandson of Heraclius, feared that the Senate and people should one day seat his brother Theodosius on an equal throne. He therefore by the imposition of holy orders disqualified Theodosius from assuming the purple. But this ceremony, which seemed to profane the sacraments of the church, was insufficient to appease the suspicions of the tyrant, by whose orders the Deacon Theodosius was put to death. His murder was avenged by the imprecations of the people, and Constans the assassin condemned himself to voluntary and perpetual exile. But if Con-

stans

The admirable expression this painter excels in bestowing upon his juvenile figures was conspicuous in the visionary form of the martyred Theodosius; while the agonizing remorse of the conscience-stricken emperor, as he fled abhorrent from the baneful draught, was given with equal fidelity to nature.

Though not inclined, and not possessing the same reasons to be affected by visionary ideas as the Condc, Las Sierras, flushed and exhausted by the interminable meditations of a restless night, felt himself disagreeably impress-ed

stans could fly from his people, he could not fly from himself. The remorse of his conscience created a phantom who pursued him by land and by sea, by day and by night; and the visionary Theodosius presenting to his lips a cup of blood, said, or seemed to say, "Drink, brother, drink!" a sure emblem of the aggravation of his guilt, since Constans had received from the hands of the royal Deacon the mystic cup of the blood of Christ.

Decline and Fall.

ed by the various surrounding objects, half revealed and altered in their proportions as they were by the flitting light and intermingled gloom.

His mind too much engaged to heed the want of rest, he had now remained several hours in the same posture, with his arms folded in thought, and his head resting upon the table, when a stupor rather than sleep for a few moments stole over his faculties. He might be said scarcely to have closed his eyes, and the objects that surrounded him mingled, as in a trance or waking vision, with his recollections of the past and apprehensions for the future.

He imagined he saw Constantina enter by the door the Conde had closed upon him, and that the moment was arrived to unite his fate to hers. Ordognez was the priest—the table at which he leant was converted into an altar—and he clasped, with a bridegroom's transport,

transport, her plighted hand in his. Infant spirits of the air, fluttering their gauzy wings, held the hymeneal chaplet over the head of the bride. He looked again, and her bridal dress was exchanged for the habit of a nun—it was no longer Constantina, but Donna Rosaura stood before him. The chaplet of flowers, held over his head, was withdrawn, and in the place of it, a bloody axe hung suspended! Then, invisible hands flung over the devoted pair the mortuary pall. At this instant, the figure of the murdered Theodosius appeared, detaching itself from the painting, to approach in the attitude of presenting to Las Sierras the fatal cup—"Drink, brother, drink!" the spectre seemed to say. Don Juan turned his eyes on the figure that offered it, while his hand repelled the deadly draught. Theodosius had vanished, and, in his place, stood Don Juan Gonsalez!

Don Juan de las Sierras endeavoured

in vain to shake off the unpleasant impression produced by this waking dream. The incongruity of the circumstances indeed were such as to prevent the possibility of any thing approaching to its fulfilment. Above twice his age, and consecrated to celibacy and devotion, Donna Rosaura, beautiful as she was, stood to him only in a maternal light; while that part of the vision which transformed the royal brother into Don Juan Gonsalez, was rendered still more incoherent and inexplicable by the circumstances attending his own origin and that of the mountain chief.

In a different spirit from the detestable Richard, Don Juan de las Sierras might say—"I have no brother, I am like no brother," and therefore he had nothing to fear from a brother's wrath; yet, in spite of all these arguments, a secret voice arising from the depths of his heart seemed still to murmur woe. It

was

was one of those mysterious feelings which, according as they are contradicted or fulfilled in the sequel, are despised as fantastic, or respected as prophetic.

Don Juan started from his feverish dream, and looked out upon the night. It was a fine moonlight one, like that in which he once had met Gonsalez. Unable to rest, he rose and sought the refreshing influence of the cooling air, where, beneath the soft beams of a waning moon playing upon the rich and chequered foliage of the orangery, hours passed away unheeded, and morning found Don Juan as undecided as ever respecting the path he ought to pursue. It was still some time before he need join the Count and Donna Rosaura at their morning repast, and he deferred the meeting, till the early breeze, the perfumes it wafted all around, and the harmony of the birds, should have a little

composed

composed his mind, disturbed and harassed by the affrighting visions of the night.

Scarcely was breakfast over, when the Conde d'Almarez was informed that two strangers requested admittance to his presence. The arrival of visitors of any description was a circumstance of such rare occurrence at the Castle of Almarez that, when to this was added the particularity of their refusing to tell their name and business to any but the Count, this inauspicious manner of announcing themselves excited a thousand alarming suspicions in the bosom of Donna Rosaura.

The eldest of the cavaliers was a man advanced in years. The younger seemed to act in subserviency to him.—"We come, Conde d'Almarez," he began, "in the name of the supreme Junta of Aranjuez, to demand of you a report of the Serrania de Ronda, and how many

many men it may contain capable of bearing arms?"

"The Junta are mistaken," returned the Conde, recovering from his momentary confusion, "if they suppose me to possess any influence over these lawless mountaineers."

"That is evading our question, Count," said Don Evaristo Paez. "Did the Valencian (commonly known throughout the mountains by the name of El Sombrero) and General Gonsalez, did they or did they not offer to bring ten thousand men into the field?"

"They are, both of them, unknown and suspicious characters," replied the Conde sullenly, "characters with whom I disdain to hold any intercourse."

"Yet you did not disdain to hold intercourse with an enemy of the state and monarchy," interrupted Don Fernando d'Azara.

His companion imposed silence on him

by

by a look.—"Don Juan d'Avellana, Conde d'Almarez," he resumed (taking from Fernando d'Azara a bundle of papers which he displayed before the intimidated assembly), "you stand accused to the supreme Central Junta, of harbouring treasonable intentions, and holding a secret correspondence with the enemy. Either clear yourself of these foul charges, or prepare to accompany us to Aranjuez."

Every heart, interested in the fate of Don Juan palpitated with apprehension at this, the awful crisis of his fate. Not a doubt remained on his sister's mind of his treasonable intentions, and, as for Las Sierras, the disgraceful particulars were to him but too well revealed. The greater their anxiety for him, the more they shunned the appearance of scrutinizing his looks; yet neither could forbear stealing a glance at his agitated countenance as he prepared to answer

the

the accusations the strangers had preferred.

During the few moments Don Evaristo Paez and his colleague had employed in this discussion, Don Juan d'Avellana had found time entirely to recover his self-possession and composure. Turning towards them with a dignified serenity, which his extremely fine figure and prepossessing countenance rendered the more impressive—"Surrounded by attached domestics, and not totally destitute or undeserving of friends, I might, Senhors," he said, "question the legality of these proceedings, or at least successfully resist them: but I bow to the authority of the Junta, wishing to die, as I have lived, the supporter of the well-being of Spain.' Senhors, it is certainly in your power to drag me before your tribunal—to shorten a life already embittered by trials of no ordinary magnitude, and bow down

by

by the weight of unmerited obloquy, a head grey with sorrows more than years. The vigour of my mind consumed in endeavours to deserve well of my sovereign—my body macerated by the religious austerities observed since withdrawing to this retreat, the wretched wreck is still as much as ever at the service of my country; but you will not sprinkle the remnant of my days with calumny, unless your hearts are wholly inaccessible to the clearest proofs that I am undeserving of it."

In breathless expectation, the friends of the Conde, his sister and his adopted son, waited to hear what daring assertion this unfathomable being would hazard next. Don Juan d'Avellana did not keep them long in suspense—"Speak, Las Sierras," he said, "and to these, your country's awful delegates, briefly explain my plan of action; unless, indeed, you are less forward than last night

to follow my wishes, or blush to assert your own capacity for command."

Then formally presenting the young man to the deputies of the Junta—" In this youth, Senhors," he said, " you see the better part of d'Avellana—the depository of his most secret thoughts—the executor of his plans. Ill health forbidding me to take the active part my spirit burns to espouse, I have sought to instill into him, by precept and example, an enthusiastic attachment for his country's true interests. For months, in the habit of training them, Don Juan de las Sierras will give you every information you can desire respecting the Serranos. Withheld as yet only by the consideration of his immature youth, and not judging the danger so pressing as to render it necessary to plunge headlong into domestic warfare, still it was for *him* I destined the command of those patriots, whenever a Frenchman should

dare

dare to fix his standard among their mountains. For that reason, and for that alone, I resented the officious interference of intermeddling strangers, in Gonsalez and the Valencian. My policy was weak, timid, erroneous, perhaps, but never otherwise than honourable.

"I submit to your decision—henceforth let Don Juan de las Sierras openly act as general in chief of the Serranos. But perhaps it may be as well, as the artful stranger Gonsalez has obtained an influence (not immediately to be shaken) over them—it might be as well to confirm him in possession of the joint command,, where *his* greater experience may be of benefit to *my* Juan's yet unpractised youth."

After some further conversation, this arrangement was agreed upon; and Las Sierras, after a night of agony between the alternative of giving up his earliest protector, or renouncing every subsequent

quent claim of honour and of love, found himself suddenly instated in the very post to which his most ardent wishes had pointed. True, it was on an emergency, to relieve the Conde's selfish fears; but still, his appointment was not the less certain; and it was with a glow of the most heartfelt satisfaction that he stept forward by order of the Conde, and took the oath of allegiance that confirmed him for ever in the patriot cause.

Still further to evince his unblemished loyalty, the Conde insisted on entertaining the deputies at the Castle of Almarez.

During the magnificent repast that followed, Las Sierras said little and observed less. His thoughts were all turned inward; and the great and arduous character thus suddenly imposed on him absorbed every faculty. So rapid indeed had been the changes of a few hours, that it seemed

ed to him like the effect of some sleight of magic: and, accustomed as he was to the wily and impenetrable character of Don Juan d'Avellana Conde d'Almarez, one would have said he looked every moment to see him throw off the mask, and unweave, as dexterously as he had woven it, the political web he had wound around him.

Whatever were the cogitations of Las Sierras, the Conde d'Almarez did not suffer any disagreeable retrospections to damp the flow of urbanity with which he seemed determined to treat his unwelcome guests. How he exculpated himself from the enigmatical circumstance of having the French Colonel many days his guest (one of the charges brought against him) Las Sierras did not hear; but the commissioners of the Junta seemed satisfied; and towards evening, when they took their departure, so seemed the Count.

 Before

Before the family finally retired to rest, Donna Rosaura found herself a moment alone with her brother — she seized it to express the feelings of her full heart on this eventful, but (to *her*) most satisfactory day. Approaching to take his hand, with mingled tenderness and respect she raised it to her lips, and then exclaimed—" Oh, my brother! dear and revered, but now more than ever valued, since I wronged your virtues—live for your country, and to reproach Rosaura!"

For a few moments Don Juan looked steadily at her, and then burst into a fit of laughter so loud, so sustained, so inextinguishable, that since the days of that most amusable of princes * the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, of facetious memory, no sally or tale ever equalled this simple exclamation of the lady's, in exciting boisterous applause.

At

* *As* represented in the Arabian Nights.

At length recovering himself from an agitation, that, owing to its rarity, had really something portentous, and regarding her more seriously, he cried—"You women are excellent politicians! so you, too, were really a dupe!"

Donna Rosaura looked at him aghast, and silently waited an explanation—the Conde resumed—"No one this morning could doubt what awaited me—the lion was fairly caught in the toils—their suspicions have only a little accelerated my resolution. You would not have had me say to the bloodhounds—'Senhors, it is really true, I am a very dangerous person—I abhor the worn-out tyranny, and all its imbecile supporters; and therefore advise you, as a friend, to incarcerate me in this castle, or escort me, bound hand and foot, to Aranjuez.' Nothing could rid me of their importunate presence but to do what I did—send in my adhesion—(was not that our old friend

 Villeneuve's

Villeneuve's word?)—to the Spanish Bourbons; and now, with all convenient speed, for the Retiro*.

Shocked with the cool and shameless openness with which Don Juan avowed his double treachery, his gentle sister gasped for breath; and, as she clasped her hands together in heartfelt anguish, involuntarily uttered a short mental prayer; but soon recovering her resolution, she calmly said—"Juan, you have grieved my spirit beyond what I supposed aught earthly could have grieved it. But in weal or woe I follow you—can I do less for a brother whose undeserved kindness——"

"Enough," said Don Juan—"you know how I hate professions;" and as he spoke conscience secretly murmured—"Surely the punishment of my guilt is begun, by the daily torture of the wronged Rosaura's thanks!"

"And

* Palace of Joseph Napoleon.

"And Las Sierras," resumed Donna Rosaura, tremblingly—"is he then only a sacrifice?"

"Las Sierras," resumed Don Juan, "is, by this untoward circumstance, of necessity devoted to the other cause. Till the enemy approaches, he must be employed, instead of making hollow professions (as I intended he should) at the Rctiro, in firing blank cartridges in the Serrania."

"And can you make so light of the difference that divides patriotism from its opposite—and can you so easily give up all interest in Las Sierras?"

"What!" exclaimed the Count, in a scornful tone, "do you suppose that, after having cultivated it with years of painful toil, I leave my young olive-tree, just as it begins to blossom, for stranger hands to gather the luxuriant fruitage? No, no, Rosaura," he continued, "with an accent of unusual sen-

sibility, "excepting yourself, Las Sierras is the only being who excites in this withered heart a feeling of affection. He is the offspring of my mind; and surely never did a more promising disposition repay the parental watchfulness I have bestowed on him. To part from him for ever would be worse than death. It may be a selfish feeling, but I am convinced I cannot exist independent of his attachment—some way or other his fate is linked indissolubly with mine, and some way or other I feel persuaded," added the Count, in a gayer tone, "that, though hard necessity may divide us for a season, we are destined to stand or fall together."

Donna Rosaura was far from satisfied with this conclusion, which, instead of promising an honourable patronage for Las Sierras, threatened his inexperienced youth with a conflict of claims and principles under which he might sink.

Convinced

Convinced how vain it was to hope she could detach from a cherished project a mind so subtle and dark as that of Don Juan d'Avellana, she resolved for the present to be silent on the subject.

The first day her youthful *protégé* assumed the dress of a general of the Serranos, Donna Rosaura, with a womanish feeling, which all her self-imposed austerities had not wholly obliterated, requested he would appear in it before her.

The rich and noble fashion of the natives of Spain had not, in this southernmost point of the country, been wholly superseded by the modes of France. Don Juan de las Sierras was habited in a close military dress of the colour of the country, celestial blue, richly trimmed and laced with silver, and confined by a sash in which the three Andalusian colours, blue, red, and brown, were intermixed. A crimson scarf, edged with

silver fringe, was thrown across his shoulder; and in his belt were two silver-mounted pistols, of exquisite workmanship, the present of the Count, which, together with the good antique sword given him by his friend Gonsalez, formed his defensive equipment. He wore the Spanish white-topped buskins and Spanish hat, surmounted by a tuft of eagles' plumes and ostrich feathers.

"This morning," he said, addressing Donna Rosaura, "one of the elders of the Serrania told me, that, with my hat off, I greatly resembled my father—of *that*, Madonna, you cannot judge; but you can tell me whether the mere assumption or deposition of the martial casque can make such an essential difference in a man."

With these words the graceful youth laid down his plumed hat, and turned on the lady a smile, all radiant with affectionate playfulness. Donna Rosaura

started,

started, shuddered, and, while she put aside his question with some frivolous reply, her eyes became dim with tears, and she murmured, in a voice inaudible to Don Juan—" The mountaineer said true: thou' art, indeed, like—too like, thy father!"

CHAPTER II.



——— ——— ———His eye
Had that mild pensiveness which sorrow loves.
The gentle gaze that to the sufferer seems
Compassionate of anguish yet unspoke;
As if, with instant presage, it foreknew
All grief, and scarcely needed tale of woe
To melt in pitying fondness—with quick tears
And smile so ready of consoling peace,
As if it listened more to sooth than learn.

Poem of "Agnes."

From this period Don Juan Gonsalez, and Don Juan de las Sierras, began to act together as leaders in the Serrania de Ronda.

The

The first event that threw a cloud over the satisfaction of Las Sierras was the public apostacy of the Conde d'Almarez. This nobleman, pursuant to the determination he had secretly acknowledged, lost no time in departing with his household and family to Madrid; proceeded to pay his duty to Joseph Napoleon at the Retiro; and, loudly disavowing all the patriotic proceedings of the mountaineers, was speedily created, in consideration of his services past, present, and to come, Duke of Almarez.

The shame and regret he experienced on his former patron's defection, was not the only evil Las Sierras had to suffer from it. He saw that Gonsalez looked on him, occasionally, with a jealous eye; and that it required all his native sincerity and enthusiasm to do away the impression that his patriotism was tainted with a leaven of the

vacillating

vacillating policy of the house of Almarez.

He had taken up his abode with his friends in the mountains. The deserted, disgraced, now uninhabited Castle of Almarez, he could not revisit without feelings of the most acute description; and the little town of Grazalema was the arsenal to which the mountaineers transported their military treasures.

Gonsalez soon brought the Serranos into some degree of discipline; but, with increasing power, the latent ferocity of his character began to betray itself. He professed above all things to love and venerate the English, and to make that nation his model; but Las Sierras saw, with regret, that he chiefly borrowed from them those points of discipline, which, even among themselves, every friend to humanity would wish altered. So great became the awe and terror his rigid inflexibility inspired, that, from a blessing

blessing he was now almost considered as a scourge in the Serrania. But, if in Gonsalez they had a severe judge, in Las Sierras the mountaineers had an unwearied advocate; and so great and general was the love he inspired by the zeal with which his amiable disposition prompted him to temper the severity of his colleague, that, had they been required to personify the opposite characteristics of justice and clemency, no other models would have been sought by the sons of the mountain than the two Don Juans.

Though Las Sierras still contemplated with admiration the character of Gonsalez, this admiration was mingled with an uneasiness he had not experienced at the commencement of their friendship. In him, the virtue of patriotism was carried to its most romantic height; but Las Sierras sometimes asked himself if his chosen friend was possessed of any other?

Ease,

Ease, fortune, friendship, every thing he was ready to sacrifice to his country, and expected in others a similar degree of self-devotion. Spurning the more mixed motives by which the generality of mankind are actuated—" Do you think," he said, in reply to a confident anticipation of Las Sierras, respecting the ardour with which the mountaineers would fight in defence of their homes and families in the hour of danger, " do you think it is of this homebred, fireside stuff that the true lover of his country is composed? No, Las Sierras—undeceive yourself—it is not the man whose affections are divided into numerous petty channels, it is the lone and blasted one, it is the orphan of the heart, who, deprived of all *that* heart held dear, clings to his country with convulsive, despairing fondness, and looks forward to *her* happiness as the only compensation for the destruction of *his own*. I have read

read of a Scottish warrior, for the mountaineers of all countries have some traits in common, who left the corpse of a murdered wife, a home in flames and pillaged, to march forth the renowned and immortal champion of his native land. Fame talks, too, of a modern chief, to whom misfortune first pointed out the path to glory; and who, if I mistake not, will yet make this land the theatre of his recorded honours. But I do not dispute the efficacy of a pretty woman and rosy family in nerving the warrior's arm on some occasions," added Gonsalez in a lighter tone, and unwilling to press to its utmost extent an argument that might, in time, be turned against himself. "Different dispositions require a different treatment. Love may do as much for you, my dear Las Sierras, as hatred does for me. The actuating principle matters not, so the effects produced are the same."

As

As he spoke, his glance fell upon the dark eye of Constantina, who, seated at her work, and as usual half concealed in the shadiest nook of their humble dwelling, had been a silent, but not uninterested listener to the preceding conversation.

For the first time Las Sierras was struck with an unpleasant suspicion of collusion between them. There was something too like art in the versatility with which Don Juan Gonsalez, the most dogmatic and positive of men, had suddenly given up a favourite opinion, which he had been hurried to maintain by the enthusiasm of his feelings; and the answering glance of Constantina, and the blush that overspread her face and neck, seemed, to his jaundiced mind, a confirmation of all he apprehended.— "What! was he considered as a machine in the hands of a wily and popular leader, who played upon his lively passions at pleasure?"

For

For a moment, the idea completely chilled the flame of love; and its influence evinced itself in a manner so cold and constrained towards Constantina, that, had she not been withheld by her maiden pride, it would have drawn showers of tears from her eyes; and, as it was, it entirely damped all her native spirit and vivacity.

Unpractised in the diversities of female character, still nature taught Don Juan that there was more true affection in this momentary dejection and loss of self-possession, than if, with all the ease and freedom of a practised coquette, she had been able successfully to laugh and rally him out of his suspicions.

He did the artless Constantina but justice. Her glance had been one of assent to a sentiment she thought more favourable to happiness than the dark corroding thoughts usually cherished by her brother-in-law; while her blush was occasioned by the alarm her sensitive delicacy

licacy endured at the idea that her brother should compromise her feelings of decorum in the eager desire of supporting his own schemes of policy. Don Juan de las Sierras was incapable of voluntarily inflicting the smallest undeserved pain.

The same hour witnessed the commencement of this tacit misunderstanding and its termination; and a change in the counsels of Don Juan Gonsalez, which tended toward a temporary separation between Las Sierras and Constantina, seemed to revive in that hour of tenderness all his pristine ardour.

"I wish to employ you, my dear Las Sierras," said Gonsalez, "in a manner that will ensure you more distinction than loitering among these mountains. I begin to believe the politic Conde d'Almarez only yielded you to my wishes, because he knew there was no immediate employment for you. This interval affords

an

an opportunity to inform yourself, and report to me the exact state of the guerillas of the Sierra Morena. For that purpose you will have to pass into Estramadura, while I remain here. The absence of both of us at the same time might be fatal; for I wrong him much, or yon old Spaniard is dangerous."

As Gonsalez spoke, his quick eye glanced towards the venerable man known throughout the mountains by the name of El Sombrero.

Wrapt up in his capa, the Valencian lay indolently reclining in a flowery nook; and, while enjoying himself in the sun with the lethargic satisfaction of age, seemed wholly intent upon watching the grotesque gambols of his goats and kids sporting up and down the mountains, as he carelessly hummed the burden of a sequedilla—

"Todos cantan la cachucha
E yo canto el sereni."

"Now"

"Now would you believe this is all consummate art?" said Gonsalez; "while he affects to be wholly engrossed with the animals that he has tamed to surround him, or the rustic sports of the scarcely more enlightened shepherds and maidens that tend their flocks, he is, in reality, stealing from beneath his huge sombrero a glance at our gestures and countenances; and I should not wonder if the demon, who I believe to be his good friend, were at this moment humming about him in the shape of a mountain bee."

Las Sierras smiled at the expressions of whimsical anger which the jealousy of divided power (for such it *was)* forced from Don Juan Gonsalez. His friend resumed—"There he lies, sunning himself like a tired greyhound in yon little hollow—to my mind he would look much better on one of those cork trees."

"Nay," interrupted Las Sierras, "El Sombrero's

Sombrero's active days are over—he must leave climbing trees and ascending rocks to the more hardy mountaineer."

"But supposing he were *helped* up," inquired Gonsalez, with a meaning smile, "by the aid of a trusty cord wound round his neck, or, as he gives out he is of blood royal, a tissued rope of silk, or even gold, if it please him better?"

"Am I awake? do I dream, or am I to believe you serious, Gonsalez?" asked Las Sierras shuddering.

"Believe what you please," answered his friend, carelessly; "but surely even such promotion were too good—supposing him a traitor."

Here the conservation ended, but not so the uneasy reflections it caused to Don Juan de las Sierras. Could he be mistaken in the choice of a friend, that most important choice in life? yet, if Gonsalez's inclinations were not cruel, what object

had he in thus sounding his opinion? Never before had he revealed so much of the ferocity of his disposition. Till now, Las Sierras had believed him stern, but not bloodthirsty. If he had indeed committed an error respecting him, the mistake did not end with himself.—"Alas!" he exclaimed, while reflecting on the simple mountaineers, "shall I leave ye to the ravening wolf, while imagining I confide you to the care of the shepherd?"

Beloved as he had been from infancy in the mountains, Don Juan de las Sierras had still further endeared himself during his residence among them. The attaching kindliness of his manners, which every where created an inclination in his favour, even before the prepossession was confirmed by reason, was, in him, so far from being the superficial varnish of an unfeeling character, that it might rather be compared to the fra-

grant

grant and beautiful blossom, which, lovely as it is, is only the promise of the more valuable fruits that succeed it. His departure was considered by his countrymen as the most serious evil that could befall them. *Who* would now by the most unwearied diligence mitigate the severity of the haughty Gonsalez? who would, by his ever-ready kindness, pour balm into the wounds of the sufferer even when the hope of remission was past?

But if such were the feelings of the comparatively indifferent Serranos, what were the sufferings of the too tender Constantina as the moment of this first —this perhaps final separation approached! Wretched and inconsolable, she sought the loneliest valley, and there breathed in sighs, what she durst not give to words, the overwhelming emotions of her distressed and impassioned spirit.

Don Juan de las Sierras found her thus; and though the importance of his mission, and the variety of cares that pressed on his attention tended to dissipate, in his breast, the feelings of parting sorrow, still the sight of her tender grief unmanned him, though she endeavoured, with her wonted pride, at first to deny both its cause and its excess.

"Ah, Constantina!" said Don Juan, "when I go for the first time into unknown scenes, will you not give me some pledge that my future wanderings interest you?"

"Take this ring," said the bashful maiden, "and never, till you return it with your own hands, shall I believe that those unknown scenes can make you forgetful of Constantina."

Transported at this unexpected concession, Don Juan would have clasped her to his breast in a last embrace.

"Enough," said Constantina, gently repressing

repressing him, "your plighted word is sufficient."

"Nay," said Don Juan, gaily, "both now and formerly, the coldest contract between man and man has been wont to be confirmed by some outward and sensible token; and shall the sweetest of all earthly engagements alone remain unsealed, too cautious and cruel Constantina!"

Yet notwithstanding these reproaches, which she still continued to deserve, it was impossible for the affection of Don Juan to surpass that which glowed for him in the faithful breast of his mountain maiden. The circumstances under which it had been kindled in the bosoms of each, were indeed somewhat different; and their feelings partook of the nature of that difference. Constantina was, in the eyes of Don Juan, a most lovely woman, and the first that happened to recommend herself to his youthful fan-

cy; but Don Juan was to Constantina not merely the first, but the only man in the world; and all others were as nothing for his sake. Had Don Juan lost Constantina, he would have felt acutely; but the very recollection of her charms might perhaps have led him to seek relief in feminine endearments again: but Constantina, in losing Don Juan, would have felt that the world, and all its concerns, were over with her for ever. In short—

"*He* threw for a large stake, but losing, he could stake, and throw again: but *she* had set her sum of happiness upon this cast, and not to succeed were to be stript of all."

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

Giace il cavallo al suo signore appresso:
Giace il compagno appo il compagno estinto:
Giace il nemico appo il nemico: e spesso
Sul morto il vivo, il vincitor sul vinto.
Non v'è silenzio, e non v'è grido espresso;
Ma odi un non so che, roco e indistinto;
Fremiti di furor, mormori d'ira:
Gemiti di chi langue e di chi spira.

Tasso. *Gerusalemme Liberata.*

While Don Juan was in the Sierra Morena, he heard at Llerena a rumour of the fatal battle of Medellin or Merida, in which the defeat of the Spanish patriots by the French spread consterna-

 tion

tion as far as Andalusia. Still, with that spirit which rendered this struggling nation at length victorious, the Spaniards bestowed applause instead of censure on the brave but unfortunate commanders of that eventful day: and, as the Roman Senate, after a signal defeat, voted "thanks to the general who had not despaired of the republic," so the official reporters of Seville noticed little but the intrepidity displayed by their countrymen in the action, and invoked the giant shade of Fernando Cortez*, while stalking over heaps of recent dead, to attest the undiminished glory of the spot that gave him birth.

But these boasts did not prevent the liveliest apprehensions being entertained as the news of the enemy's approach became confirmed beyond doubting; and Don Juan was preparing to return, in

order

* Born at Medellin.

order to put his countrymen in Andalusia in readiness to receive the invaders on their own ground, when, to his no small surprise, he received a letter from Gonsalez, acquainting him that he was in Castile, and summoning him to join him there as soon as circumstances permitted. The letter was no further explicit, but Las Sierras prepared to attend to its contents. Though Gonsalez and Las Sierras had been originally invested with an equal degree of command, yet the youth and gentle temper of Don Juan induced him on most occasions, as on this, to follow the lead of his more imperious colleague.

He now proposed to quit the neighbourhood of the Sierra Morena, and was pensively considering what could be the cause of this abrupt departure of his friend from Andalusia, when he was accosted, at the turning of a street, by a woman whom he had often remarked in

the dress of a *Tourière* of a convent of Veronican nuns at Llerena, who followed the rule of St. Francis. Fixing her large dark eyes upon him, she slipped a paper into his hand, which contained the following words:

"If Don Juan de las Sierras be generous and enterprising as he is reported to be gentle and brave, he will repair to the cloisters of the Convent of St. Francis as soon as it is dusk this evening, and will there be told how he is required to exercise those qualities."

The billet was written in a fair female hand, and Don Juan, though extremely occupied by several circumstances both of a public and private nature, promised himself

himself punctually to attend to its contents.

"A singular appointment, and a singular mode of conveyance," he said, as with a smile he remembered the person who had delivered to him the letter.

Don Juan did not fail to be in the cloisters at the hour appointed; but he walked up and down a considerable time before any body joined him. At length a tall figure, muffled in a black cloak, beckoned him to approach, and he perceived, by the voice, it was a female—probably the one who had addressed to him the billet.

"Your being here proves that I was not mistaken in you," she began. "You are not unknown to me, Don Juan de las Sierras. The fame of your virtues has long since passed the mountains of Estramadura, and, thus emboldened, I address you—You are about to depart for Castile?"

 Don

Don Juan was surprised the incognita should have such an accurate knowledge of his intentions. She resumed—"The actions of the virtuous and noble are of greater interest to others, than those of the world in general are to them; but, though unknown to you, wonder not," she continued, in a solemn voice, "that I am apprized of what relates to you. You are now conversing with one who has for many years been numbered with the dead—nay, start not—I yet live to pay the melancholy tribute of humanity—to know its agonizing fears, though dead to hope for ever—to require the aid of strangers—yet stranger I will not call you, when I reflect at *whose* hands you received your nurture—I am the unfortunate Countess of Almarez!"

From the tenor of her last words Don Juan felt less surprise than he should otherwise have done at this strange communication; but ere he could express

what

what he felt, the Countess rapidly resumed—"Some future period will clear up all. The story of my preservation is immaterial to you as that of my woes—what I want is your present assistance—and to that effect I must first ask—will the General of the Serranos consent to any personal communication with the Duke of Almarez?"

Don Juan hastened to assure her that, in every thing unconnected with the public interest, he should feel ever anxious to discharge, by any service in his power, a part of his debt of gratitude to the house of Almarez.

"Did he confide to you my story?" asked the Countess abruptly—then observing Don Juan hesitated—"Fear not to acknowledge the extent of his confidence," she added—"I, who have so long made my peace with God, have not to blush before man for errors so cruelly expiated. But of *one* I still re-

pent—

pent—fearful of his discovering me, when preserved almost by miracle from the revenge of a justly irritated husband, I determined to bury my child along with myself within these walls—to keep him in ignorance of the existence of his Louisa—Nay, by devoting her to the monastic life, by a double barrier to separate her for ever from her father.

"I have been punished. The place that I thought would prove a tranquil port has turned out a den of horrors. From the time the invaders first entered this country, what apprehensions have I not suffered! Danger approached and I would have revealed all—and a convent being no longer an asylum safe and inviolate, have consigned *her* who was more precious to me than life to the care of her natural protectors, the Count and the sainted lady Rosaura of Almarez. But," continued the Countess, lowering her voice, "the abbess of

this

this convent is a wicked woman—the asylum she at first seemed prompted to afford me from motives of benevolence, was offered in fact only to the richly endowed sinner who could pay with gold and jewels the privileges of admission. Even now she dreads the loss of one subject more in Louisa, who has just completed her noviciate; though she knows that the next moment may burst open the convent gates and turn its inhabitants adrift, the prey of a cruel world. Even now, were it known that I gave you this meeting, my life might answer for it; nor could I have accomplished it but by securing one member of the community to which I belong in my interest.

"What I have to say demands dispatch. In a few days, if she stays here, Louisa must take the vows. Oh let her not, like me, complete the sacrifice and deprive herself of the power of flight.

flight. I must await the worst—and, were I free, where could I fly who have made an enemy of him who was my sworn protector: but she—she is innocent, and may be yet preserved. Can you engage to assist her flight from lawless power? Under the protection of her father, who has purchased—dearly purchased consideration and security, she may live in the practice of all her duties till permitted to confirm her engagements in happier times. You are going to Madrid—you stand, in some respects, in the light of a brother to Louisa—will you—dare you, Don Juan de las Sierras, promise to assist two hapless women who have no support—no hope but in you—who find themselves compelled to break through decorum's obvious bounds as the only means of securing real safety—and who have no refuge from tyranny but in exposing themselves to danger?"

Don

Don Juan hastened to give the Countess every assurance she might require, and Elvira resumed—"Be here to-morrow at midnight with two fleet Andalusian barbs—despair must teach Louisa courage, and the consciousness will support her that her flight is blessed with a mother's prayers for her safety and speedy arrival to her father's arms. These papers," she continued, putting a packet into the hands of Las Sierras—"these papers, which my husband has my full permission to communicate to you, will inform him of all that has befallen me since——"

Here a flash of light along the cloisters convinced Don Juan and the Countess that they were no longer unobserved—steps were heard approaching, and Elvira had only time to say—"We are betrayed—for this I shall suffer—perhaps shall die. Oh, Louisa! my best beloved—my child—thy mother dies content for thee!"

At

At these words, which betrayed the powerful force of maternal affection surviving in a breast that had been heedless of all its other duties, Don Juan looked up, expecting to see Elvira seized and dragged away by stern monastic figures, when, oh! what a contrast met his view! Arrayed in robes of dazzling white, more like a radiant vision than any "mortal mixture of earth's mould," stood the figure of a lovely virgin, bearing in her hand an alabaster lamp. It was Louisa, the novice of St. Francis—"Mother," she said, in a voice of melody, "the convent clock has chimed, and I feared some inquiry might be made for you."

"Your fears are just," Elvira replied, with a sigh; "retire, Louisa, and I will go with you—But first," with a sudden recollection, she added—"let me present to you your friend and mine—the brave Don Juan, General of the Serranos, who

undertakes

undertakes to convey you in safety and honour to a parent's care."

Don Juan bowed profoundly, and, as the novice returned his obeisance, a blush of the purest vermilion overspread the ivory of her fair complexion. Her eyes, of the deepest blue, were bent to the ground; but Don Juan could remark the beautiful form of her dark brows and eyelashes, while her hair, which was not yet sacrificed at the shrine of mistaken piety, was of the same ebon hue. Never, in his opinion, had he seen beauty till now! *Here* was the graceful symmetry of form, the fine proportion of feature, nature's most perfect work; while the dress of a novice of the Veronicans rather set off than hid her charms. It was a flowing robe of white, fastened at the waist by a black girdle, from which depended a rosary, and relieved by a white veil which floated negligently on her shoulders.

"Let

"Let us be gone now," said Elvira; "remember to-morrow at midnight."

The two ladies disappeared among the cloisters, leaving Don Juan to ruminate upon the wonderful changes a few hours had revealed to him. His meditations on the whole were pleasant. Independent of their flattering a degree of romantic knight-errantry which he possessed, where is the youth would not be pleased to find himself trusted and sought on the fame of his good qualities? and when to this we add the pleasure of snatching a charming woman from apprehended danger, and relieving a once-loved benefactor from a load of imputed guilt, it is not wonderful that he embarked with alacrity in the task he had undertaken.—"Yes, Louisa," he exclaimed, "my sister, my friend; you shall be *that* to me, precluded as we are both by engagements equally sacred from ever being more to each other."

At

At the hour and place appointed, Don Juan was ready with two swift horses, and the addition of a tried and faithful servant, who led a third for himself. Two females closely veiled soon made their appearance. Don Juan could hardly recognise in the figure completely wrapped in a thick horseman's cloak, the angel of light that had charmed him the evening before; but he readily acknowledged the voice of Elvira in her solemn parting adjuration—"Go—lose no time—the enemy are almost at the gates. And so may God speed you, stranger, in this world and the next, as you are true or false to me or mine."

Louisa was lifted on her horse, and they travelled through the night without intermission. Towards morning they took some rest—and, before they again set forward, Don Juan endeavoured to learn from his fair charge how far she was acquainted with her own history:

tory: but her shyness and reserve were so excessive that he could not once get her to raise her eyes to him—far less to enter into conversation. He could not help fancying some slight degree of fear and aversion mingled with this reserve; which was to him the more extraordinary, as he was unconscious in what manner he could have possibly offended her.

At their next halting-place, when they stopped to change horses, perceiving this to continue, he respectfully remonstrated with her. At length subdued, and struck with the strong family resemblance she bore to those who were associated with his earliest, tenderest recollections, his ardent wish to obtain her confidence lent additional energy to his tones—"What is it you fear, Donna Louisa?" he said with respectful earnestness.

Thus pressed, the wayward beauty ventured

ventured for the first time fully to raise her eyes to his. The impression he produced seemed favourable; for of Don Juan it might with truth be said,

> "Not his the form, nor his the eye,
> That youthful maidens wont to fly."

Yet still, her lips refused to give utterance to the answer she meditated. But the prejudice (of whatever sort) she had conceived against him, seemed abated; and when he proposed, instead of the hot and close confinement of a posada, that they should follow for a short space the sinuous windings of the river Guadiana while their refreshment was preparing within, Louisa gave a silent assent, and, with timid footsteps, led the way to those hallowed retreats so often the scene of prowess, of poetry, and song.

There is something in the more interesting scenes of nature, particularly when

when connected with historic or poetical recollections, remarkably calculated to draw out, between young people, whatever there exists in them of accordant sympathy and taste. But from the supposed narrow confines of a conventual education, Don Juan expected to find little of this sympathy in Donna Louisa. The name of "Cortez" which accidentally fell from her lovely lips, as she mused along the scenes in the neighbourhood of his birthplace, convinced him of his mistake, and that the thoughts of Louisa had, unknown to herself, strayed in a similar direction to his own.

Delighted to find in so fair a form a mind equally intelligent, Don Juan hazarded a few observations to Donna Louisa, which soon proved her as well versed in the history of her own country as himself. The succession of triumphs in Peru and Mexico were brought

under

under review, till the tear of pity trembled in Louisa's eye to think those triumphs had been bought so dear; and Juan, following the lead of her kindling fancy, returned with her, from the bloody fields of Cortez and Pizarro, to celebrate the earlier victories gained by the Christian host over the Moors in those plains watered by the Guadiana—victories in which, like most Spaniards, Louisa exulted with unmingled enthusiasm, as not being, like those in South America, gained over guileless and unoffending innocence, but sealing the triumph of the assailed and insulted cross.

"Now, Donna Louisa," said Don Juan, looking at her animated countenance with a tender delight, which arose from a thousand intermingling and associated recollections, "you remind me of the lovely Donna Rosaura in her happiest moments; but oh, how far—still

how very far beyond her! Yet that brow of command is all the Duke d'Almarez. How will he doat upon you, and how severe I *now* feel that duty, which estranges me from his side, after having received my nurture and every early blessing at his hands!"

"Your nurture at the Castle of Almarez!" Louisa repeated. "Am I not speaking to Don Juan Gonsalez?"

"Gonsalez is not so happy," Don Juan replied, with a suppressed sigh; "your defender is Don Juan de las Sierras."

"Into what an error did my precipitancy or inattention lead me," resumed the young lady, "in not properly distinguishing the two Don Juans! You are not then that terrible guerilla—that——"

"In short, Donna Louisa, I am not Don Juan Gonsalez," interrupted our hero, with a smile of irresistible sweetness

ness and good humour; "and since he has unfortunately incurred your displeasure, never did I more heartily rejoice in my own identity. Your father's name, too, is Juan; although it was not he who conferred that name on me. Oh! when your beauty and attraction shall have subdued the whole household to your wishes—when you shall see Donna Rosaura perhaps with a tear honour Juan de las Sierras, deign to recal these brief moments passed together on the flowery banks of the Guadiana to your remembrance, and tell them," he continued, his voice faltering with emotion, "though war will divide hearts that long beat in unison, the General of the Serranos wears in his breast, never to be effaced, the remembrance of the family of Almarez."

"I will," said Louisa, pointedly, and in the manner of a person who takes an engagement. "But there is one ex-

 pression

pression in your discourse to me, Senhor, which I never heard before, and which I do not understand—it is beauty—my beauty! what is that?"

In any other female, Don Juan would have looked on this question as the most silly and undisguised trap for further adulation; but there was a collectedness and grace in Louisa's manner, a serious simplicity of expression, that made it sacrilege to doubt she was in earnest.

Not knowing exactly how to reply, Don Juan repeated, in the words of the gallant Augustin de Salazar,

* Soberana hermosura
Cuyos luzeros
Solo han sido imitados
De vuestro espejo.

"That

* A Spanish *Extravaganza*, which may be thus English-lished—

Oh! sovereign beauty! whose all-conquering rays
Your glass alone can emulate or praise.

" That is very fine, Senhor," said the novice blushing; " but unfortunately ' el espejo' is a counsellor I am not permitted to consult. My mother taught me," she continued, in a more serious tone, " that nothing but evils follow consulting the dangerous glass. That what we see there drives every good thought from our minds, to put pride, vanity, self-love, in their place. Therefore, from my tenderest years, I was brought up without looking in a glass; and as to beauty, I have scarcely an idea of what it means."

Don Juan had heard, had read of beautiful women destitute of vanity— he had known instances of it himself— but the phenomenon of a beautiful girl absolutely and bôna fide ignorant of her charms, exceeded his most romantic ideas; and, when to this was added a modest yet well-cultivated mind, informed upon all subjects that lend vari-

ety and interest to discourse, and ignorant upon that one alone, it altogether presented a picture too novel and fascinating to be perfectly free from danger.

Singular as the circumstance was, he could easily find a solution for it in the early history of the unhappy Elvira; whose beauty had been her ruin, and who, intending her daughter for seclusion, had devised this method of preserving her mind untainted by any longing wish to display her charms.

But this delusion must soon be over with the innocent Louisa, and Don Juan could not resist the dangerous pleasure of being the first to dissipate it. Imperceptibly he had led her to the extremest verge of the river Guadiana, where the waters flowed beautifully clear. He then begged her to pause a moment and remark what she beheld.

Bending over the stream, Louisa perceived

ceived at once his motive—gazed with silent attention on the wonders it presented to her, till suddenly her countenance was lit up with the liveliest exultation; and, turning to Don Juan, who had watched with attention every variation of it—"How I bless my Creator," she exclaimed, with energetic simplicity, "for bestowing on me a form worthy to be consecrated to his honour!"

"Celestial creature!" Don Juan felt tempted to exclaim, almost thrown off his guard by this new surprise. "If a convent is, indeed, the school of sentiments so elevated, the world may blush at the littleness of its motives, and its votaries throng to receive instruction within your walls. How much you must have suffered," he continued, changing the dangerous theme, "since the enemy have been in the South!"

"We redoubled our fasts and pen-

ances," replied Louisa; "even the unprofessed were not excused from them. The greater part of the nights were employed in praying for the success of the Spanish cause, while, during the day, we prepared medicines and relief of various kinds to send to the wounded French *."

Struck with this mixture of patriotism and charity, which no heathen virtue—nothing short of Christianity could dictate to these pious nuns, Don Juan remained silent for a while, but it was the silence of admiration; while his heart whispered—"This, this, and not the intrepid spirit that braves personal danger, is the true glory of woman!"

Having now in a degree gained the confidence of Louisa, Don Juan endeavoured to improve this advantage to draw from her the cause of her prejudice against Gonsalez.

To

* Historical.

To this she would only reply, with a caution surprising in one educated in such seclusion—"Oh but he is your colleague!"

Happy in the present, Las Sierras was content to drop the painful subject; but still, the unpleasant idea recurred to his mind, that there were more rumours abroad respecting this wonderful man than had yet reached him.

The cool evening breeze springing up, our travellers again set forward. They had proceeded some hours without the occurrence of any thing remarkable. As they advanced, however, in the obscurity of a moonless night, vague terrors began to haunt Louisa's mind. They were evidently traversing a champaign country, yet suddenly, and without any apparent reason, her horse stumbled. Scarcely able to hold the rein, with a trembling hand she urged him on—in vain, at every second step he paused, put his

 head

head to the ground, raised it again as if seized with terror—and then, gently lifting up his feet, seemed as if trying to disengage them from some entangling burthen.

All was dark, silent, and dreadful, at that lone, solemn hour. Once, and but once, a loud whizzing noise like the flight of innumerable birds arose—then all was still again. The air itself seemed oppressive, and though ashamed of her weakness, she felt, when she wished to address her companion, her voice sink in thick and suffocating sobs.

At this moment Don Juan rode up to her. Louisa longed to hear a human voice. He spoke some words of tender inquiry and encouragement, yet seemed himself to labour under internal agitation.

At length Donna Louisa could bear this suspense no longer—" Oh Don Juan!" she exclaimed, " what is this? where

where are we? I feel as if under the influence of some drear enchantment, or misled by the wandering spirit of dreams. My horse, too, moves, and yet scarcely seems to advance. And what was that strange noise like the flapping of innumerable wings—that dreadful, indescribable noise—what was it?"

Don Juan's voice sunk to an agitated whisper—"Courage, Louisa, my sister, my friend! We shall soon have passed the plain of Medellin, and then——"

Medellin! Oh what an explanation was conveyed in that single word! They were crossing, in silence and darkness, the vast and dreary plains of death!

Morning at length dawned, and disclosed the scene of carnage they had passed. But Louisa turned sick at heart, and would fain have shut her eyes and stopped her ears from the sights and sounds that assailed them. Mixed with others still more frightful, her at-

tention was arrested by the dismal howlings of some shepherds' dogs, and she wondered to hear such sounds in such a place. They proceeded from the dogs who guarded the flocks of La Mesta, sent as usual to winter on the banks of the Guadiana. But now the flocks shrunk in terror from their accustomed pasture, and mingled their mournful bleatings with the lengthened howl of the dogs that protected them.

Louisa now cast a timid and hurried glance around. All was dreary, desolate, horrible. Above the field of slaughter black figures like threatening phantoms hovered. Donna Louisa remarked the circumstance to Las Sierras, and in a voice almost inaudible from terror— "Those objects advancing along the horizon," she said, "are they not men?"

At that moment the same mournful funereal sound she had heard in darkness, and compared to the rushing of

wings,

wings, arose, and with more distinctness to her ear. Flight after flight of vultures sailed over her head; and, as she again lost the sound of their flapping wings, and saw them at a certain distance, she observed the illusion repeated that lent them almost human size.

At length, to the indescribable relief of Don Juan, their resting-place appeared in sight, and he hoped that, performing the rest of the journey in a more easy manner, nothing further would occur to disturb the tranquillity of his lovely charge. Vain hope—tranquillity came too late. There was no occasion for terror—personal danger to herself there was none—but that sensation more dreadful, more powerful and complicated to the sensitive mind—horror—had taken complete possession of Louisa's soul. She did not complain—she did not weep—but all her faculties seemed bound up and suspended by the dreadful influence of this unaccustomed scene.

Whoever

Whoever has seen the engraving of Bürgher's Lenora, "beautiful in death;" may have an idea of Louisa's pale, powerless form, as Don Juan lifted her, unresisting and insensible, from her horse. He could not help owning to himself that Constantina would have exerted more spirit; but his whole soul dissolved in manly tenderness as he hung over this ruin of helpless and too interesting beauty.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

I'll give thee Misery, for here she dwells;
This is her house, where the sun never dawns.
The bird of night sits screaming o'er the roof,
Grim spectres sweep along the horrid gloom,
And nought is heard but wailings and lamentings.

Jane Shore.

ALL fear of immediate pursuit being over, Don Juan procured a carriage at Merida for Donna Louisa to continue her journey, while he and Pedro, his servant, rode by the side of it. Even this indulgence was of difficult attainment—almost all carriages and waggons having been pressed for the removal of the sick and wounded.

Refreshed

Refreshed by a night's repose, Donna Louisa professed her willingness to set forward; but, though she endeavoured to rouse her spirits, it was evident her health was unequal to the effort. They had now entered Castile; at Toledo she became so ill that it was necessary to rest a day or two before they could think of proceeding further.

Don Juan de las Sierras determined upon fixing the interesting novice during that period, if possible, in some private house; and, attracted by the superior appearance of one in particular, he knocked at the door, not doubting but the inhabitants would willingly extend that hospitality to the daughter of a powerful grandee, which they were compelled every day to exercise, against their will, towards the French.

The door was opened by a pale and haggard female, who inquired the stranger's pleasure. She appeared young, and

her

her long brown hair fell in disorder on her shoulders—but her countenance was one of such wild and fearful sorrow, that Don Juan repelled by her appearance, and apprehensive of its effect on the already disordered spirits of the invalid, was going to advise Louisa not to enter. The young lady, however, preparing to alight, signified to her conductor that she preferred this place to any other.—“ Perhaps,” she said, in a whisper to Don Juan, “ this poor woman’s sorrows may be of a nature for wealth to relieve, and, if so, we must not miss this opportunity of doing a good action.”

The female led the way to some good apartments, and the travellers were quickly domesticated in this melancholy house. The whole family consisted of an old man, and this his daughter Mariana; and their melancholy, springing from whatever cause, seemed equally profound and unbroken.

Donna

Donna Louisa immediately retired to her chamber; but Don Juan partook with the household their silent meal. After it was over, the old man continued sighing between the intervals of smoking a cigar, and never interrupted himself to speak beyond the exclamation of "Ay Jesu!" addressed to his daughter, which she would return, with a tearful eye, and then they relapsed into silence.

Weary of forming a third in such a party, Don Juan became anxious to know if they had particular causes of grief beyond the general distresses of the country; and, seizing an interval when the old gentleman had laid down his cigar, he addressed him some words of sympathy.

The old man looked wistfully at him —"Senhor," he said, "you are just arrived, or you would have heard of the sad fate of my daughter Mariana."

The young mourner put her hand

upon

upon his arm—"Oh father—not *to him!*" she earnestly said, looking towards her guest with an expression of terror; "Don Juan de las Sierras would not feel for us, and——"

"And why," asked Don Juan with emotion, "should you suppose me a heart inaccessible to pity?"

"Because," replied the old man with another deep sigh, "you are the friend of him who is pitiless—who, more cruel than the French——"

"Nay now, father," said Mariana, drawing her veil over her face, "is it thus you heed me?"

"Peace, my child—since I have said so much I may say all—God knows we have not to be ashamed of our misfortunes. In short, Senhor, we thought—blind mortals as we were—*those* misfortunes were at their height, when forced to admit the French as guests within our walls. Others may report what they will,

will, but it was our fortune to meet, in the officer quartered upon us, one of the most amiable and generous youths to which any country ever gave birth. D'Arlons was I believe in his heart a royalist. Though a conscript from his earliest youth, his manners spoke him what he really was—descended from a stock of ancient and pure nobility. The first thing he did was to enter into a voluntary engagement with me, that not an article of property or furniture should be injured by his soldiers while he remained in the house. He regretted the rights of war, that by billetting the soldier on the citizen, disturbs and dispossesses them, and never did he avail himself of the smallest of those rights. In short, he gained our hearts—and, from dreading him as an enemy, I learnt to look on him as a son-in-law. When he took leave of us, he was engaged, in less dismal times, to return and claim Mariana,

riana, with fifteen hundred good pistoles, as his bride. Since that we have had far different Frenchmen, and have been pretty well plundered, and forced to wait upon ourselves."

"And did he never return?" asked Don Juan.

"Return!" said the old man, shaking his head emphatically. "In this world, unhappy youth! he returns no more—his days are numbered—and before this week expires, he adds another victim to the vengeance of the terrible guerilla, Don Juan Gonsalez."

Here another burst of anguish from Mariana drowned the old man's voice; and Las Sierras, who felt himself by this time deeply interested in the narrative, was some moments before he could get him to give an explanation to his former words.

By this it appeared that some time

previously, a party of Gonsalez's men were taken by a party of French, and cruelly executed in the mountains of Guadarramma.

Gonsalez, who had completely adopted the system of warfare by reprisal, had taken an oath to put to death the same number of Frenchmen, in the same place, and in the same manner. Lieutenant D'Arlons was one of the first that fell into his hands, and though no way concerned in the outrage against Gonsalez's guerillas, it was well known that his doom was fixed from that fatal moment.

The heart of Las Sierras recoiled from this statement. This then was the manner Gonsalez distinguished himself in Castile—it was to perpetrate such cruelties, that, not content with lording it in the Serrania de Ronda, he traversed every province, moving from place to place with the malevolence, and almost the

the ubiquity of an evil spirit. He felt degraded by his connexion with him, and that nothing could redeem him in his own eyes but being the means of stopping the atrocity he meditated—"By heavens! he shall not conclude it," Don Juan exclaimed; "I am in Castile to join Don Juan Gonsalez, but you do me injustice, Senhora, in supposing I countenance cruelty. You say there are some days yet intervening before the execution of the sentence—I'll fly to Guadarramma——"

Here, the recollection of Louisa recurred to his memory; and he, for the first time, felt *that* responsibility a heavy burthen which he had accepted with delight. He paused—Mariana seemed to understand him—for the gleam of hope that had lightened in her dark eye faded away: and, crossing her hands meekly upon her breast, she said—"Father, I will go and see if aught is wanted by the lady."

"Do so," replied the old man; and, again taking up his pipe, he ejaculated his melancholy—"Ay Jesu!" and was soon absorbed in the fumes of the Spanish consolation for all woe.

Don Juan passed a restless night. Whichever way he turned the image of the murdered D'Arlons pursued him—of D'Arlons murdered with a solemn mockery of justice, which only rendered the barbarity of the act more heinous. He felt himself involved in the crime, and that, to know, and not try to prevent it, was, virtually, to share in it.

With a breast glowing with the purest patriotism, Don Juan had ever held in abhorrence that sanguinary system of reprisal—a system calculated only to multiply atrocities, to render reconciliation impossible, and which often visited the sins of the guilty on the head of the innocent.

He was awakened by a message from Donna Louisa—Mariana announced her

as so much better as to be able to remove into their best sitting-room, and that, there, she awaited an interview with Don Juan.

"I have made this slight effort, Don Juan," said she, holding out her hand to him with an air of bewitching sweetness, "that before your departure I might take leave of you."

Don Juan started—"Take leave!"

"Yes," resumed Louisa. "I trust that, last night, gentle were your slumbers—but *mine* I acknowledge were disturbed. I saw Don Juan arresting the arm of a man of blood in the mountains of Guadarramma. To be serious with you, my brother—my friend—*I* must not be the worthless cause of your leaving a good action unperformed. I am charmed with the attention of Mariana—my health and strength will be quite restored when you return—my mother, herself, if she knew it, would approve of my

urging you. In short, Las Sierras, you must go."

Much more she said, and Don Juan could only conclude that Mariana had disclosed her story to the fair enthusiast, and worked upon her feelings so as to induce her thus to urge him.

Thus free to depart, Don Juan neither let distance nor danger weigh with him; but, hastily recommending Louisa to the care of her respectable hosts, determined, if it was yet possible, to save the life of a fellow-creature. He premised Louisa to be back at the end of two days at farthest; and hoped, by that time, to find her able to proceed to Madrid.

"And I," said Louisa, "will put up prayers for the success of your enterprise, and may you be in time to check the career of that cruel man!"

"In what a manner," thought Don Juan, as he took the way to the Guadarramma

darramma mountains, "do I meet Gonsalez again!" But his anxiety in the cause of humanity soon overcame other considerations, and he performed the journey with a rapidity that had scarcely been equalled by any other traveller.

When he arrived at Guadarramma he found Gonsalez was absent—gone no one knew whither—but was directed to a lady who was supposed to possess more influence than any other person over the mind of the terrible guerilla.

Though affecting to scorn all tender ties, Las Sierras remembered having often heard Don Juan Gonsalez speak with enthusiasm of the charms of Isabella de Montemayor: and it was through the means of this unknown fair one that he hoped to make his remonstrances reach to the breast of Gonsalez.

He had expected to find in a female the most lively and active sympathy, but he was mistaken in the character of Isabella, which differed from any of those

of which he had as yet had experience. Without either the gentleness of Louisa or the generosity of Constantina, Isabella possessed beauty and spirit, to which she united no small share of cunning. Ambition was the only tie that attached her to Gonsalez, and the pride of holding so fierce and haughty a spirit in her chains. For the rest, she had imbibed, in a degree, her lover's vindictive cruelty of disposition, mixed with a portion of that patriot enthusiasm which at this period more or less distinguished all the females of Spain.

"You argue in vain, Don Juan de las Sierras," she said; "the vengeance of Gonsalez is founded in justice and right. Eight of his men were lately taken in these mountains, and, without offer of exchange or ransom, instantly put to death—and eight of the enemy's men shall assuredly suffer upon those very trees that witnessed the fate of our faithful guerillas."

"Heavens!

"Heavens! do I hear a woman?" exclaimed Don Juan de las Sierras. Then, suddenly flinging himself at the feet of the obdurate fair one—"Donna Isabella," he said, "I will never rise from this suppliant posture, till I have moved your heart to join with me in obtaining the pardon of those unhappy captives. Where is the merit—where the valour shown in this unequal vengeance? Those hapless individuals did not seek the life of his guerillas. Shame to the cause that seeks in terror its support! Oh, Donna Isabella, if Gonsalez ever possessed your heart, for your own sake—for his—for that of humanity, exert your influence with him. I conjure you to suspend this barbarous—this iniquitous sentence!"

Isabella's resolution was shaken. She appeared deeply moved—and while her eyes rested on the amiable youth pleading so warmly in mercy's cause, she

 wondered

wondered she could ever have listened to his ferocious colleague.—"You mistake, Don Juan," she at length said, with a trembling voice; "Gonsalez seeks my hand, but he never had my heart—no never. Yet if you desire me to plead the prisoner's cause to him ——"

She stopped—covered her face with her handkerchief; but, before she had done so, her blushes had told Don Juan the unwelcome truth that he had excited an interest on his own account, where he least desired it, and that, if he accepted Isabella's offers of mediation, he should contract an obligation which every principle and feeling alike forbade him ever to acknowledge or repay.

Too late convinced of his imprudence, he suddenly rose, and changed his entreaties to a request that she would tell him when he might see Gonsalez.

Isabella answered coldly that he did

not

not return till the end of the week—the day that he was to inspect the execution of the prisoners; and that she knew not exactly where he was to be found, as he had talked of joining Porlière's guerillas.

Every thing Don Juan de las Sierras heard of this mysterious and dangerous man convinced him, too late, of his precipitancy in forming an indissoluble intimacy with him. As the reputed friend of Gonsalez, all seemed to fear and shun him. From his conduct since he had been in Castile, it appeared that he followed up the same system with his countrymen that rendered him so formidable in the South.

This delay in his return was distracting. Las Sierras durst not now trust his cause to Isabella. Yet to leave Louisa longer than he had promised in uncertainty, was to break through the tenderest and most sacred engagements.

 —"Still,

—" Still, would she herself approve my return with my task unperformed?" he mentally exclaimed; as, after quitting Isabella, he walked, with irresolute step, in the neighbourhood of the scene that was to seal the cruelty of Gonsalez.

Suddenly he came to a cross—it was rudely formed of wood, and smeared with blood—a memento of some terrible deed. Near it, stood a clump of blasted trees—a superstitious horror filled the black and gloomy shade—mechanically he counted their number—it was eight. Conviction flashed upon his mind—he was on the spot where a cruel execution had taken place, and, in a few days, that very spot would witness the sanguinary expiation of Gonsalez.

With what decisive force do sensible objects sometimes act upon the mind! This dreadful sight fixed the wavering resolution of Don Juan—" They must be saved!" he cried—" and I must not

leave

leave the Guadarramma mountains without seeing Gonsalez. Oh for an express to Toledo!"

"Did you leave your mistress there, Senhor?" said the voice of a person who unexpectedly came up close to him.

Our perplexed cavalier started, and descried, emerging from the trees and brushwood of the mountain, one of the most graceful youths his eye had ever beheld. He wore a short vest of brown cloth, edged with a chain-lace of sky blue, a scarf of the same colour, fringed with silver, and a straight, antique sword. This habit was Andalusian, but Don Juan did not immediately advert to it; and as to the features of the boy, they were completely concealed beneath the shade of a sombrero hat, that reminded him of his friend in the Serrania de Ronda.

In a less assured tone the boy resumed his address, telling Don Juan he

was

was departing for Toledo, and offering himself to be the bearer of any message there.

Such an opportunity was not to be neglected. Don Juan returned with the Andalusian to the inn where he had left his horse; and hastily wrote a statement to Donna Louisa of the cause of his delay, in which every thing but the name of the perplexing Isabella was mentioned.

Still, fearful that she would scarcely admit an unaccredited messenger, he pulled off his ring—the ring that Constantina had given him in their last interview in the Andalusian mountains, and, giving it to the stranger along with the packet, bade him present it on being admitted to the presence of a lady of whom he was to inquire at the house of an aged citizen, Diego de la Barca.

"Is the lady handsome, Senhor?" asked the youth.

Don

Don Juan smiled at the familiar pertness of his manner: yet still could not forbear doing justice, in his reply, to the superlative beauty of Louisa.

"I do not think there is any danger of my falling in love with her," the boy resumed.

"She is not for man to aspire to," said Don Juan, gravely; "enough of this, and see thou do my errand."

"Nay," said the youth, "but I would just remark, love does not nicely measure dignities—I have a better reason for being sure I could not love her."

"'Tis dangerous to be too sure of aught," interrupted Don Juan with a sigh:

"Suppose my heart were already another's?" demanded the young stranger.

"And to whom may it be given?" asked Las Sierras, amused at last, and roused to some curiosity by his pertinacious trifling.

The Andalusian wrung his hand, and

 replied

replied in a voice of suppressed agony—"To one who has betrayed, scorned, and broken it! From your own hand I receive back your ring, Don Juan de las Sierras!"

With the ring and packet in his hand, the messenger darted from the inn, leaving Don Juan to deplore this misconstruction, and wonder at his own blindness. He had confided to safe hands the anxieties of his heart! The express he had trusted with his message was Constantina!

The explanation of this was clear. She had accompanied her brother to the mountains of Guadarramma. But why she should be dressed in men's clothes, he could not so well understand; and, though she appeared to advantage, he did not approve the transformation.

However unjust the impression, his passion for Constantina always diminished when he imagined he had any

subject

subject of complaint against Gonsalez. Together they had awakened the first feelings of love and friendship in his breast, and the two sentiments seemed formed to exist or expire together. Don Juan sent immediately after Constantina, but was informed that the young cavalier, on quitting him, had taken horse, and was already on the way to Toledo.

Exhausted with so many exertions that had only led to deeper perplexities, Don Juan threw himself on the miserable settle of a more miserable inn, and tried to snatch a few hours' rest; but the thoughts that crowded on him were greater enemies to repose than the manifold discomforts that surrounded him.

He tried in vain to disentangle the confusion of his ideas, or even to ascertain what were in future his own plans and wishes. The prediction of the monk Ordognez, respecting the fatal

agency

agency of women in his destiny, came over his mind, and he thought that already in part he saw it fulfilled.

Constantina—Louisa—Isabella—what confusion and perplexity had they already wrought in his fate, and for what future trials might he not still be reserved? An additional reason for lamenting his precipitancy soon presented itself, as he discovered that a few hours' waiting would have rendered it needless for him either to apply to the one lady, or accept the suspicious offers of the other.

The hostess gently entering his chamber, apologized for disturbing him by saying he was anxiously inquired for. She was followed by the person who most occupied his thoughts—the formidable General Gonsalez.

CHAPTER V.

Beyond or love's or friendship's sacred band,
Beyond myself, I prize my native land:
On this foundation would I build my fame,
And emulate the Greek and ROMAN name.

ROWE.

"I SEE," said Gonsalez, flinging down his plumed hat, and throwing himself with an air of sullen discontent beside Las Sierras, "I do not owe your presence to zeal in the good cause, but rather to a desire of stopping the course of justice."

"Of cruelty!" his colleague felt tempted to reply; but aware that to irritate

is

is most impolitic when the speaker has a favour in view, he more calmly answered—"Rather say, I come, Gonsalez, on an errand which, in your cooler moments, you will rejoice I undertook—I would prevent you from perpetrating an action that would affix an eternal stain on the guerilla name."

Don Juan Gonsalez fiercely smiled, and, interrupting him, scornfully replied—"When we want your counsel, we will call for it; till then, be content to execute the designs intrusted to your discretion."

"Nay, by Heavens, I will not submit to be thus tutored!" exclaimed Don Juan de las Sierras, the pride of conscious equality in rank and merit asserting its influence. "I wish, Gonsalez, to save you from yourself. Hear me—when first I gave you my unlimited confidence, it was to the fearless patriot, the generous assertor of his country's

rights—

rights—the noble and enlightened being who, taking pity on our darkness and ignorance, came to add the rays of science to the native impulses of untaught valour—to direct the peasant's eye, and nerve his arm for conquest."

"And did I not?" interrupted the guerilla. "Perish Gonsalez, ere his heart admits a thought injurious to his country's honour!"

"And think you 'tis promoted by deeds of cruelty and blood? Mistaken man! when your ear drinks the curses poured on you for the ferocity of your promiscuous vengeance—when you listen to the milder plaints of domestic anguish, you will feel their withering influence fall on your nerveless arm, and the charm by which you rallied thousands to your standard—the lustre of a glorious and unsullied name, tarnished for ever by the ineffaceable stain of murder. Oh Gonsalez, you know not

what

what tender ties this bloody execution will dissolve!"

Here Don Juan related the particular circumstances that led him to interest himself in the fate of the young French officer condemned to death.

Gonsalez heard him with affected patience, till at length, bursting into a scornful laugh, he exclaimed—"And this is the motive of your errand, Don Juan de las Sierras! and you suppose Gonsalez capable of being swayed by a lovetale to alter his settled purpose! Know, then, that if the being most dear to me on earth were to kneel in supplication at my feet, it would make no difference in my determination once gone forth. Every day witnesses the cruelties practised upon our countrymen, and I should scorn myself if I suffered the voice of love, friendship, or interest, to arrest my just retaliation. No!—salvation to Spain, and hatred—eternal, inextin-

inextinguishable hatred to her enemies, shall be my latest words in life, and when I fall, I wish no other epitaph."

As the guerilla spoke, his dark eyes, ever matchless for spirit and brilliancy, actually shot forth sparks of fire; and he concluded, waving his hand with an averting motion, as if to prevent all further discussion—"I have resolved, and it is not in human power to alter or mitigate my decree--whenever the victim falls within my grasp, he shall expiate his wrongs against this unoffending nation with his blood; and such should be my words, even though the traitor were my brother!"

Completely repelled and disgusted, Don Juan de las Sierras turned away, muttering some indistinct expressions of which Gonsalez demanded the import.

"Little to affect you, Senhor," answered Las Sierras, smiling haughtily;

"I was

"I was only returning thanks to Heaven *that I was not your brother.*"

Gonsalez frowned—"Ha! dost thou palter, boy? I know all that has passed between you and Constantina, and, by Heavens! if you meditate falsehood in return for her generous truth——"

"No threats, Don Juan," said Las Sierras, coldly, "whatever I determine shall be the result of my unbiassed judgment."

Gonsalez darted a look of fury at him—"This boast is good," he sneeringly said, "and well becomes the false minion whose smooth flatteries and Adonis form robbed his friend of the heart in which he trusted, when *disinterestedly* pleading soft pity's cause at the feet of Donna Isabella!"

"Gonsalez, you wrong—greatly wrong both that lady and me," replied Don Juan, colouring deeply; "yet once more hear me—if not for that of others, for

your

your own sake suspend this cruel deed. Think of the prophecy, pronounced perhaps by an enemy's voice, yet which you seem madly hastening to fulfil—think how will *those* weep who rejoiced in the bright dawnings of your glory, to see you voluntarily exchange the name of El Liberador for——"

"What?" demanded Gonsalez, fiercely.

"For that," replied Las Sierras, "of El Empecinado."

Again Gonsalez smiled, and replied in a tone of peculiar emphasis—"Of that I have *no apprehension.*"

Then, as if some prudential reflection induced him to check his wrath, he calmly added—"Enough—let this be the last dispute between you and me, Las Sierras; to end it at once, know that while we have been here debating, *my soldiers have fulfilled my orders.* So Gonsalez has more humanity," he continued,

nued, in a tone of irony, "than Las Sierras gave him credit for, and would not *witness* an execution! But if you will, we can now sally forth unmolested, and see how our captives grace the trees of Guadarramma."

Don Juan de las Sierras looked at the monster with a mixture of horror and disgust, then, starting from his seat, exclaimed—"If so, I have no further business here."

He exchanged not another word with Gonsalez, but, inquiring for his horse, vaulted into the saddle, and was in a few moments on the road to Toledo.

Don Juan performed this second journey under an agitation of spirits that did not permit him to consider any thing distinctly. The only clear idea his mind admitted was that all must be over between him and Gonsalez. His barbarity had cut the ties of friendship and esteem that had united them before.

He

He had undertaken a commission the most painful at a period the most inconvenient — had humbled himself at the feet of a haughty beauty, and wasted hours in endeavouring to soften her and her more ferocious lover to adopt the sentiments of humanity with which his own bosom glowed, and what had been his reward? To find he had not the smallest influence with a tiger for whose friendship he had exchanged every earlier, more domestic endearment. But were there not *other* reasons that prompted his conduct?—principles fixed in the eternal and immutable laws of nature and virtue, and that cannot change with the views of those who profess them?—There were; and Don Juan solaced himself with the thought that his breast could still throb with patriotism's purest flame, though unsupported, as formerly, by friendship for a patriot.

But, as he approached the spot which

contained

contained Louisa, these reflections gave way to considerations of a more domestic nature. He dreaded the consequence of the disguised Constantina's interview with Louisa—that she had informed her of their engagement; yet why dread it? was not Louisa a consecrated vestal, whom he never durst approach but with the feelings of a brother?

Unable to resolve so many questions, our perplexed adventurer rejoiced to find himself once more within Toledo's walls; and discovered that, in one respect at least, busy Fancy had amused herself in playing on him the trick with which she often delights in tormenting those who resign themselves too easily to her dominion. In *one* instance at least his apprehensions had outstepped the reality: for a few moments' conversation with the beautiful novice (whom he found much recovered) informed him that she had received his ring and letter by an unknown

unknown messenger, who had not asked to see her, and had instantly departed.

"So far all is safe," thought Don Juan; but he could not help reflecting, with a bitter pang, on the agonizing feelings of Constantina, as she turned from the door with the erroneous but deep conviction she had left a happy rival within.

When Louisa, returning him his ring, anxiously inquired the success of his mission, Las Sierras felt all selfish considerations melt before the overwhelming sense of the dreadful tidings of which he was the bearer, and, turning from the asking looks of Donna Louisa, he, for some moments, gave way to the painful, powerless sensibility with which his heart overflowed.

The first alleviation he experienced in this bitter hour, was the voice of Louisa saying, in the softest accents—"Patience,

ence, Don Juan—we are commanded patience. Think," she resumed, after a pause, "what *I* must feel, who have to communicate this sad tale; and yet ——"

This appeal was the most forcible that could be made to the oppressed heart of Don Juan—it roused him to the necessity of action—"No, Donna Louisa," he said, remembering how much her tender spirits had been shaken at Medellin, "it is not for you, beloved, angelic being, thus to brave misery in every shape—to *me* belongs the bitter task to be the bearer——"

At this moment his fortitude was put to the test, by the return of Mariana and her father from a neighbouring church, where they went every day to put up prayers for the preservation of their brave friend. Scarcely daring to cast another look on the pale and trembling Louisa, Don Juan hurried out of

the

the apartment: while Louisa, casting herself on her knees, besought of Heaven fortitude for the hapless beings on whom a man with the tenderest of human hearts was going, involuntarily, to inflict the severest wound.

Presently a shout of anguish from below informed her that the worst was known; and her natural repugnance to witnessing such affliction was soon overpowered in the bosom of the virtuous novice, by the desire to administer consolation.

With a timid step she descended the stairs. It is painful to dwell upon scenes of irremediable misery—suffice it to say, that the rest of this day was spent by Louisa in such gentle offices of consolation as it was in her power to bestow; while Don Juan, who felt as if his hosts must transfer to him a portion of the horror they entertained for the blood-minded Gonsalez, was impatient

to hasten her departure from this house of hopeless woe. On the morrow they set off for Madrid.

In the course of their little journey, Don Juan remarked that Donna Louisa had exchanged her rosary, which was of very costly materials, for one of plain wood; and in the conversation that ensued in consequence of his remarking the circumstance to her, she confessed to him that not only the rich rosary, but most of the money and jewels her mother had given her before she began her journey, had gone to console, at least as far as pecuniary offerings could afford consolation, the unfortunate inmates of the house she had quitted.

Though vexed at this conduct, for he could have wished to consign her to her father's care with whatever gifts or tokens her mother had intrusted to her, Don Juan did not find it possible to reprove the cherub-like being, whose very

errors

errors shewed a mind lovely as her outward form.

He contented himself with some slight remarks on the lavish nature of her bounty; and discovered, from the answers of his fair charge, that she was nearly as ignorant of the relative value and importance of property, as of the power of beauty. Such innocent and endearing helplessness, joined to a mind naturally strong and comprehensive, as her heart was ingenuous and tender, he had never witnessed, or even imagined; and involuntarily he figured to himself the happiness reserved for those on whom the task would devolve of interesting *that* heart, of enlightening that understanding.

But now an additional shade of pensiveness stole over the features of the beautiful novice; and Don Juan discovered, without taking much pains, that her approaching interview with her fa-

ther was, to her, a subject of the most serious apprehension.

This apprehension he exerted his utmost ingenuity to efface; and so busied was Don Juan in supporting the tender mind of Donna Louisa from sinking under the expected trial, that he had not time to reflect on the singular predicament in which he stood himself with his former friend and patron.

In the course of this conversation he discovered that Louisa was acquainted with all it was possible to know of her mother's former history, without having her mind shocked by an acknowledgment of her guilt; and that her imagination was deeply impressed with the story Elvira had related to her of her early dissensions with her husband, and the necessity of her flying to a religious retreat. The last circumstance of his cruelty, out of respect for her child, she had suppressed. Still, Louisa was prepared

pared to meet him as a severe judge, with a trembling awe amounting to terror. To dissipate this terror, Don Juan exhausted himself in the most flattering portraitures both of the Duke and Donna Rosaura, till he was startled by Louisa's asking him, with great simplicity, if such was the character of her father, why were they not still united?

Don Juan was saved from entering into the perplexing explanation this question required, by their journey's drawing towards a close; and Donna Louisa found that at least he had not exaggerated in his description of the surprise, the joy, the rapture, with which she would be welcomed to the arms of her delighted father.

CHAPTER VI.

For who can say what small and fairy ties
The memory flings o'er pleasure as it flies?

MOORE.

THE feelings of the Duke of Almarez in the interview that ensued between him and Don Juan, were of a nature that defied description. To find himself at once relieved from a load of guilt that had pressed down his mind to agony, and the happy father of a daughter who realized in herself all a parent's fondest wishes, was felicity almost too great for human equanimity; and required the necessary alloy too quickly supplied

supplied by the everduring remembrance of her mother's failure, to enable his overcharged heart to support it. He could not wish to see the guilty, though penitent Elvira. "That way madness lay." But he rejoiced to find she was yet in existence; and that an Almighty arm had prevented the completion of his sinful intentions, even at the moment he thought they were accomplished.

From the contents of the papers intrusted to Don Juan by Elvira, he found that he owed this to the firmness and fidelity of one valued domestic.

Lopez had been his master's favourite equally in the country and at court. Zeal for his patron's interest had discovered to him the transgression of the Countess, long before it was suspected by her husband, or the journey into Andalusia was undertaken. Without, therefore, being acquainted with the

particulars (formerly related to Don Juan by Almarez) of Elvira's strange confession, and her husband's sudden resolution, unsuspected, to dispatch her, Lopez had taken a habit of watching the movements of his master and mistress, which led him to remark and distinguish, even amid the terror and confusion of a night combat, the desperate direction of the Count d'Almarez's fury. Horror, and pity for his victim, now succeeded in the mind of this honest follower to the contempt and indignation with which he had, for some time past, regarded the Countess. Unperceived by his frantic master, who (as he has himself related) proceeded, after the supposed perpetration of the dreadful deed, rather like a maniac murderer hurrying onward from the place that has witnessed his crime, than a traveller acquainted with his destination, Lopez let the equipage pass on without him, and then

then hastened to the assistance of his wounded and bleeding mistress, and her unhurt but terrified child. Finding she still lived, he conveyed her to a hut belonging to his parents, for he was originally a mountaineer of the Serrania de Ronda, and there, after concerting with her every precaution that she should not be known, ensured her repose and safety till she was completely recovered.

Lopez was then uncertain whether to conceal from, or communicate to his master, the conduct he had hitherto pursued; but was determined by the terrified Countess, who, impressed with the idea, that her life could only be safe from her husband's ignorance of its preservation, extorted from the reluctant domestic an oath, under the most dreadful penalties, that he would never, without her permission, disclose the secret. Her future place of retirement she thought it best to conceal even from

him; and, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered, privately departed with her child for Estramadura, where she was certain that the valuables she still possessed, and which had, fortunately for her, escaped the search of the robbers, would procure her admittance and concealment in the convent where she had originally been educated.

The rest Elvira has already related to Don Juan; and it did not require the revived partiality of the Duke for his former *protégé*, to make Las Sierras, under such auspicious circumstances, a most welcome guest.

Often, when he had seen his unfortunate master tortured with the horrors of imaginary guilt (for Lopez believed this to be *all* the guilt of Don Juan d'Avellana), the honest but compassionate domestic would have given all he was worth to be exonerated from the fatal oath that trammelled his conscience with all

all the awfulness of religious terror—to have told him to awake to peace, for that Elvira had escaped his meditated vengeance. But this, without her permission, he durst not do; and of Elvira herself he had lost all trace, by the precautions she had taken.

The joy, therefore, of the worthy fellow at this unexpected good fortune, exceeded all bounds; and every individual, from the highest person to the lowest domestic, seemed ready to worship in Don Juan the fortunate being who was the means of bidding pleasure once more reassume her sway in the palace of Almarez.

This was for the patriotism of Las Sierras a dangerous conjuncture. He had quarrelled with Gonsalez. He was suddenly transported from fields of blood and scenes from which his memory recoiled, to the refined allurements of the most elevated life, tendered by the hands

that,

that, from infancy, had cherished and supported him. All his ancient associations were, imperceptibly, resuming their sway. Set off by the desire to please, and a mind in a state of comparative tranquillity, the Duke of Almarez appeared to the greatest advantage.

It is *one* thing to judge of a man at a distance, and only by those acts that affect the public—to hear his name constantly united to reproach and contempt, by those with whom we are in the habit of associating, and *another*, to be the favoured guest of that distinguished though stigmatized individual—the object of his attentions—the witness of his splendour—and, acquainted, perhaps, with many palliating circumstances and redeeming qualities, unknown to the loud-mouthed multitude.

Such was, at this moment, the situation of Las Sierras with respect to the Duke of Almarez. In contemplating the

the tender father and obliging host, he was in danger of almost forgetting that this same man was capable, in order to gratify a private revenge, of deliberately contributing to his country's ruin: and if circumstances could do so much for the Duke of Almarez, what was not the power of polished manners and attractive kindness in Donna Rosaura and Donna Louisa! manners that Don Juan had been early taught to require and value, and attentions that irresistibly wound round his heart with that mysterious and powerful attraction, never completely acknowledged but in the endearments of those who are associated with the homefelt sympathies and recollections of youth and pleasure's sweetest, earliest days.

In the course of a few days, Don Juan seemed to have lived over the pleasantest part of his life again. With an art that was exquisitely judicious, the Duke of

of Almarez never expressed a wish or a regret on the subject of his subsequent engagements—leaving it to time and the workings of his own mind, to suggest comparisons that might end in dissolving them.

Don Juan, however, determined to tear himself from this scene of enchantment; though yet undecided whether to make any advances to Gonsalez, or to return and take up his own command in Andalusia.

Then, for the first time, the Duke gently remonstrated; but even this remonstrance was couched under the form of obliging hospitality. He was preparing a little fête to celebrate the happiest event of his life; but its pleasures would be tasteless *if he* absented himself who alone was the cause of his recovered felicity.

Not deeming it prudent to advert to any accidental dissension, the young chief

chief of the Serranos alluded in a general manner to his engagements, which rendered a longer stay incompatible with his duty.

" I told you, my Lord," said Don Antonio de Medina, a young nobleman who was much at the palace of Almarez, " no spell could long detain Don Juan from General Gonsalez. The bold guerilla boasts he holds a silken lure by which he can recal those who would burst through bonds of iron."

The Duke frowned. Don Juan understood the allusion as relating to Constantina. The same unpleasant impression that had once before assailed his mind returned in full force at this artful insinuation; and, to prove his freedom from female influence, he determined to remain a couple of days longer at the palace of Almarez.

The present residence of the Duke d'Almarez was situated a little way out

of

of Madrid, and admirably calculated, from the natural and artificial beauties with which it was surrounded, both for purposes of magnificence and festivity.

On the morrow of the day that the conversation passed above related, Don Juan was still meditating, in no very genial mood, upon the affront to his independence of action insinuated in the discourse of Medina, when he was aroused by a little sand thrown against his window; and, looking down on the smooth and azure expanse of an artificial lake, he saw it covered with gliding pleasure yachts, and that the one nearest him was about to be entered by Donna Louisa, who stood on the margin of the lake surrounded by several cavaliers and ladies.

Her dress was still the novice's virgin white; but the veil that floated from her head was confined by a chaplet of roses. He happened to catch her eye. Her

Her features and complexion were illumined with an expression of innocent gaiety, and she looked as if she would have no objection Don Juan should join the party.

Don Juan was not long in answering the mutely expressed wishes of the young and unconscious enchantress, and making one in the floating scene of pleasure, of harmony and splendour, that now burst upon his senses.

Seated in the barge between Donna Rosaura and Donna Louisa d'Almarez, Las Sierras began gallantly rallying himself on the abstraction and inattention which had so absorbed him in unpleasant thoughts and public cares, as to make it necessary that a lady's fair hand should remind him this was a day dedicated to social mirth and repose.

A thousand varying hues, more beautiful than the tints of the morning, succeeded each other on Donna Louisa's

cheek,

cheek, while she exclaimed—"I trust, Don Juan, you do not imagine that *I* could have been guilty of a thing so indecorous?"

"I did not accuse you," answered Las Sierras; but he certainly thought that, at the moment the sand had struck the casement, Donna Louisa appeared the person the most exactly under the window.

"I trust you do not believe it," resumed Louisa, blushing still more violently; "'twas Margarita, who has herself superintended the fête, and was anxious you should witness her ingenuity."

Margarita, who was seated a little below her two ladies, did not deny the charge, and Don Juan was content to let the matter rest.

On the other side of Donna Louisa, sat the Colonel, now Count de Villeneuve, not an extraordinary—but, in

Don

Don Juan's eyes, a most unwelcome guest. He had been in action since he had seen him last, had obtained the additional rank he expected, and appeared more loquacious, more fierce, and adorned with more orders than ever.

All his former attentions to Donna Rosaura were now transferred to her niece, whose ear he was evidently ambitious to gain. His success, however, was worse than negative. Louisa turned, in evident disgust and terror, from his conversation, and bestowed all her preferences on Las Sierras.

The reason of this soon became obvious. In the Count's confident whisper, Don Juan frequently distinguished the word "Medellin;" and Villeneuve, in talking of the last service in which he had been engaged, and endeavouring, in his brigand manner (as he would have himself expressed it) de se faire

valoir,

valoir, was unconsciously every moment increasing her dread and aversion, by recalling to her mind the most horrible moments of her past existence.

Though not possessed of the finest possible *tact*, the Count had good sense soon to perceive this; and lost not a moment in turning the conversation into a commonplace, safe channel. He praised the magnificence of the Duke, the elegance of the appointments, the fineness of the music, and even the beauty of the day—but, the irrepressible conceit of the Frenchman soon breaking out, he could not forbear adding—" After all there is no country on earth like France for every thing, from the giving laws to empires to the management of a fête: and the man who excels even all Frenchmen is the Grand Duke of Berg*, the first cavalry officer—the best director of a festival—and the handsomest

* Murat.

somest man in France—the Emperor leaves all those things to him.

"The last at which I assisted was a military fête. In the morning there was a review of twenty thousand men, and Prince Joachim appeared at the head of his cavalry in the costume of all the nations under the sun—plumed hat a' l'Henri Quatre, and (to compliment the Spanish nation) Spanish mantle and ruff—veste polonaise—Turkish gilt ataghan—pantalon couleur de sang. Mon dieu! qu'il avait l'air noble. Il faisait un temps superbe. The whole scene was gay, and the dress of the Grand Duke of Berg, magnifique au possible ——"

"And well-fancied," said Donna Rosaura, ironically.

"Assurément. The French are the only people in the world for taste, and the Grand Duke of Berg the only man who has taste out of France."

"Well,

"Well, to my thinking," interposed Dame Margarita, who detested Villeneuve for his suspected presumption in aspiring to Donna Louisa, "your Grand Duke of Berg must have looked like the gracioso * of one of our tragi-comedies."

"Pour le moins la comparaison est flatteuse," replied Villeneuve drily, but determined to mortify the duenna the first opportunity. Then again turning the discourse, and addressing himself to his ancient enemy, Las Sierras, he congratulated him, in rather a sneering manner, on the more agreeable auspices under which they now met—"The Duke of Almarez is indeed singularly fortunate," he said, "as he is distinguished for wisdom and politeness. What other Spanish nobleman could assemble in the same vessel, and in the same pursuit of pleasure, a favoured subject of

* Clown.

of Joseph Napoleon, and a general of guerillas!"

"Heed him not, Don Juan," said the freespoken old dame, who concealed under an appearance of frank bluntness an anxious desire to ward off an apprehended quarrel; "there are more guerilla hearts here than are suspected. I know that *I*, for one, shall never die in peace, unless they take me back to dear Andalusia."

She then turned to Don Antonio de Medina, and asked him some question about the respected Marquis de la Romana, and this led to a conversation upon the different most distinguished Spanish patriots. The partisan generals Mina, Porlière, and others, were mentioned.—"For my part," said Don Antonio, "I can allow and appreciate merit in them all except the cruel guerilla El Empecinado. Love of glory actuates the others—hatred, on the con-

trary, seems the governing principle with *him*."

Don Juan lent a more attentive ear to the conversation. He did not know the title of EMPECINADO was yet appropriated. He demanded of Don Antonio the name of the partisan who had obtained it; but before the young Spaniard could reply, Villeneuve, with that rude officiousness which (in opposition to the perfect politeness of a grand seigneur de la vieille cour) distinguished his manners, took that trouble off his hands —"Either there are several EMPECINADOS," he said, "or the Spaniard who bears that title has, like most other Spaniards, several names besides; for you hear of him almost every where, and under a variety of different appellations. Au reste, every Spanish patriot may be safely designated as EL EMPECINADO. Implacable resentment — guerre à outrance—war to the knife, as they term

it,

it, is become their motto; and can they wonder that we also should throw away the scabbard?"

In this profusion of words, which the count poured forth so unnecessarily and unasked, Don Juan's question remained still unanswered; and if Don Antonio was able to resolve it, he was prevented for the present by a violent scream from Margarita, which called the attention of all present to the imminent danger of her dear young lady.

Unused to the water, and engrossed by the pleasure of listening to an interesting conversation, Louisa had chosen an unsafe situation, and, carelessly stooping to look at some decoration on the side of the barge, her head grew giddy, and she would have been inevitably precipitated below, but for the promptitude and presence of mind of Villeneuve, who darted forward, and was fortunate enough to save her from the impending danger.

Las Sierras was equally near her, yet had been unable, at the juncture required, to give her assistance. He had felt more, and done less. His brain had turned round at the idea of possible danger to Louisa, yet that she should owe her safety to another, and *that other* Villeneuve, was torture to his heart. All Margarita's coldness to the Colonel was thawed by this opportune accident, which gave a different direction to the ideas of every one present; and the discourse turned, from that time, upon the various dangers to which even a little voyage of pleasure might be exposed.

"No matter," said Dame Margarita, "while we are consigned to the care of such attentive cavaliers as the colonel."

But one compliment was not sufficient to obliterate, in Villeneuve's mind, the reflection she had cast on the Grand Duke of Berg, his magnus Apollo.—"You do me too much honour," returned the brigand Count; "I doubt not, Senhora

Senhora Margarita, in any pressing danger your knowledge and experience might enable you to take care of yourself. Cependant les belles pourront toujours se fier à moi. Par exemple, that reminds me of a boat-scene in which the ex-evêque d'Autun (Talleyrand), madame la Baronne de Staël, and her friend, la belle Madame Recamier, were the actors. Madame de Staël, who, every body knows, was more favoured du coté de l'esprit que de la beauté, was alluding to a pastime among us, in which the person questioned is obliged to determine *which*, among two or three names offered to his choice, he would sacrifice to some given danger. The persons named were Madame de Staël, distinguished for superior talent, Madame Recamier for superior beauty. 'Allons,' said Madame de Staël, 'confess, M. le Prince, that beauty has more influence than wit with you, and that, if this boat

overset,

overset, and only one of us could be saved, it would be my lovely friend.'—M. Talleyrand mused a moment, and then replied, avec une profonde révérence—'Assurément, Madame, vous avez le talent de nager.'

"Ah! par exemple, je ne peux pas la souffrir cette Madame de Staël c'est une phrasiére; avec ses grands mots de liberté, conscience, amour de la patrie—quest-ce que tout cela signifie? The emperor banished her solely on account of the immorality of her romances: for assuredly no one can have a greater zeal for morality than the Emperor; and then they are so exactly like each other—Delphine—Corinne—c'est précisement la même chose. Oh, ça," continued the voluble and discriminating Frenchman, "we are going to land—Madonna Louisa, permettez——" and leaving the affronted gouvernante, who saw that in her utmost need she might

sooner

sooner trust to her *talent de nager* than expect assistance from the resentful colonel, he conveyed the lady of the fête in triumph to terra firma.

A fairy-like pavilion on a beautiful island received them, and a burst of delightful music announced the arrival of the strangers. It had been named for the occasion the island of Alcina, and the company, after partaking of a splendid banquet, welcomed the entrance of some musical performers, who gave a scene from the celebrated opera which bears that name. To this, as soon as the advancing obscurity permitted, fireworks succeeded; after which the pavilion and gardens appeared suddenly illuminated, and the outside exhibited the mingled cyphers of Louisa and the Duke of Almarez, every where surrounded by a blaze of light. A delicious choral symphony now invited them to pass into another apartment,

 which

which was called the Hall of Apollo, and where the performance of various charming pieces of music well entitled it to this denomination.

At length the Duke pressed his daughter to sing, and, heedless of the various apologies that her inexperience prompted to the timid novice, so strongly urgèd the paternal pleasure it would give him, that at length taking up a guitar, Louisa, in a low and timid strain, complied.

Song of the Novice.

Oh tempt me not, with magic toys,
With dreams of gay, delusive splendor,
Nor lure from Virtue's lasting joys
A mind too weak, a heart too tender.

Believe

Believe not that the cloister'd shade
Forbids the voice of joy from waking;
Ah! never could the vestal maid
Repose, its peaceful paths forsaking.

Then tempt me not, by folly's toys,
By visions of delusive splendor,
Nor win from virtue's purer joys
A mind too light, a heart too tender.

That world, which poets feign so fair,
One moment view'd—I shrunk in terror
From mad ambition's gilded snare,
From laurell'd crime, from painted error.

Then tempt me not, with fancy's toys,
With lays of love, or dreams of splendor,
But let me, charm'd with virtue's joys,
To Heaven and HER my soul surrender.

Don Juan listened to this simple lay with a feeling of new and unpractised pleasure;

pleasure; and he thought, but it might be an illusion of the fancy, that in the course of the last verse the eyes of Louisa met *his*, with a peculiar and mysterious expression of entreating tenderness. She seemed determined in favour of the monastic life, yet half acknowledged it might not be sufficient for her happiness; and this admitted vulnerability possessed for him a fascination he might not have acknowledged in one sheathed in the panoply of perfection.

For whatever state she might ultimately decide, there were some brotherly cautions he wished to give her before he left the palace of Almarez; and the following morning, finding her inhaling the cool air from the jasmine covered lattice of her own apartment, he thought a propitious moment for it.

"To what cause do I owe the happiness of seeing you so early?" asked Louisa, who had been accustomed latterly

terly only to meet him at meals with the rest of the household.

"Such intrusion indeed requires an apology," answered Don Juan, submissively; "I come to say that, in an hour from hence, I shall be on my way to Andalusia. Angelic Louisa! my sister—my friend—can the General of the Serranos hope to be remembered in the orisons of a daughter of the Duke d'Almarez?"

"Remembered!" softly repeated Louisa; "look here, Don Juan," and she shewed him one particular bead of her rosary, a golden one, with which her father had presented her—"this is appropriated to my protector—to Don Juan de las Sierras."

Don Juan felt affected.—"One more favour," he said, "I would almost venture to beg."

"Name it, if my rules do not forbid it," replied Louisa, in a tone of encouragement.

"It is," resumed Don Juan, looking up expressively at her, "the rosary of olive-wood for which a golden one was exchanged by an angel of benevolence."

Louisa smiled—"The unpremeditated act," she said, "deserves not such marked remembrance." However, she stepped from the room, and in a few moments returned, bearing the plain wooden rosary, which Don Juan received with the devotion a pilgrim would give a sainted relic.

He now felt the propriety of departure, yet lingered another moment at the door.—"One subject has pained me," he said; "Donna Louisa, will you allow the orphan of your father's bounty a brother's privilege to name it? You are now cast upon a world where all will not respect your monastic preference, but admiring and interested suitors will alike try to shake your constancy. That Count de Villeneuve——"

"Name

"Name him not—he is my aversion," cried Louisa, with unusual spirit.

Don Juan looked at her with increased interest, then resumed—"Should you be at length persuaded to try the world and domestic pleasures, as I have sometimes suspected it was your father's wish you should, it rejoices me to find it can never be with one so unworthy of you. There is another I would caution you against—Don Antonio De Medina."

"Why those are the only two cavaliers that have conversed much with me!" hastily exclaimed Louisa.

It was the fate of Louisa's observations, from their very simplicity and directness, to penetrate like a beam of light into the more perturbed minds to which they were addressed. Las Sierras felt as if a thick curtain were removed, and that the ingenuous novice had unintentionally exposed to his view the real nature

ture of those feelings that powerfully, though, hitherto, unconsciously had influenced his conduct.

Upon examination, he found little to alledge against Don Antonio but the circumstance she mentioned, and *that* little was so frivolous, he knew not how to put it into words. He coloured—he feared his embarrassment would be observable: so, with reiterated prayers for the happiness of Louisa, prepared for his second task of taking leave of Donna Rosaura and the Duke d'Almarez.

"Farewell, Don Juan; I shall often pray for you," said Louisa, extending her beautiful hand for his parting salute.

"Estrella mia!" sighed Don Juan, pressing it to his lips with emotion: "good angels will surely guard one scarce less fair—less pure than they."

Blandly smiling, that accomplished courtier the Duke of Almarez dismissed

the

the former child of his adoption, to resume the duties of a patriot general. But Las Sierras knew not that he was supported by the prospect of future and not far distant triumph. Implacable resentment had filled his mind, from the moment Gonsalez had snatched from him the fruit of his kindness and cares. To recover this being to himself was his aim, and he thought Don Juan's own character furnished him with the means. That it might end in the disgrace and misery of this once favoured object, was but a secondary consideration. He had sworn, and he was not a man to retreat, that the son of his adoption should climb with his power, or be crushed beneath its ruins!

CHAP.

CHAPTER VII.



Dearer is love than life, and fame than gold;
But dearer than them both your faith once plighted hold.

SPENSER.

DON Juan soon lost sight of the territory of the two Castiles, but not so easily could he eradicate from his memory the impressions that a short period had engraven there. When he tried to look forward to a welcome in the Serrania and a reconciliation to Constantina, the thoughts of Donna Louisa's last farewell obtruded itself with resistless and fascinating force.—"Psha!" said he, as he looked alternately at the ring and the rosary;

rosary; "what I feel for Louisa can never interfere with what is demanded by Constantina from my true faith. The timid adieu of Donna Louisa, breathed on my soul like the intercession of some sainted spirit hallowing the enterprise which it has blessed—while the animated farewell of Constantina, when she gave me that ring, was the voice of lovely woman, animating the warrior's arm to conquest, in order to deserve her charms."

Other objects now resumed their importance, and he looked with impatience to rejoining his brave mountaineers in the Serrania.

He had passed the mountains that divide New Castile from Estramadura, when several importunate voices, demanding—"Caridad por amor de Dios," obliged him to stop his horse; and, turning about, he beheld a motley group of men and women, that seemed to have

joined

joined company for the sake of security and mutual protection.

They soon informed him they were pilgrims from the shrine of a neighbouring saint, and after paying their devotions, were returning, like himself, into Andalusia.

After satisfying their demands, he rather eagerly pushed on; for, notwithstanding their recent purification, there was an expression in the countenances of these pilgrims that would have prevented any one from wishing a solitary rèncounter with them at midnight.

After parting with them, he fell in with some of Gonsalez's guerillas, who persuaded him to take a different route from that he intended, by apprizing him of an ambuscade laid for him by the French.

As night approached, however, Don Juan was almost sorry he had attended to them, as he found his journey wòuld

be

be lengthened in consequence, and that he was at a distance from any human habitation. " The watch-dog's bay and howl," at the same time convinced him that he was not at a great distance from human beings; and, at the approach to a thick grove, fires of olive-wood, lit at equal distances, appeared the indications of an encampment of some sort in the neighbourhood. The night threatened to be dark and stormy; but now, between the intervals of the gusts of wind and the watch-dog's barking, he thought he heard the sound of mirth and music borne towards him, and, advancing farther into the wood, found the jolly pilgrims formerly mentioned, seated in a circle round one of these olive fires, and devoutly employed in emptying some of the skins of wine they had brought with them on their journey. They were all apparently animated, eager, and joyous; and the variety of dress and attitude vi-

sible

sible among them would have given employment to the pencil of the painter, while it announced that these devotees were drawn from different regions of Spain. In one corner might be seen a herdsman of La Mancha, clad in a vest of buffalo's skin, resembling in its antique form the tunic anciently worn by Roman and Gothic warriors—in another, the poor yet dignified Castilian wrapping himself up in the folds of his ample mantle—dearer to the heart of Las Sierras was the sight of the short brown vest laced with blue and red like a Moorish habit; for this proclaimed the native Andalusian, distinguished also by his dark and animated eyes, a countenance full of expression, and a singular rapidity of enunciation.

The hat and staff alone announced them for pilgrims, and their choice of a place wherein to spend the night, for poor ones. It was a scene which, united

to

to their romantic and half-discerned figures, embodied a picture in the Laureate's most interesting lay.

> " Bright rose the flame replenish'd ; it illumed
> The cork-tree's furrow'd rind, its rifts and swells
> And redder scars—and where its aged boughs
> O'erbower'd the travellers, cast upon the leaves
> A floating, grey, unrealizing gleam."

All the pilgrims hailed the arrival of the new comer with a shout of welcome; but when he wanted to pass, every obstacle seemed thrown in his way.

" You will never reach a town or even village to-night, Senhor," said one.

" Tarry with us till sunrise," observed another, " and we will engage to be your guides."

" Beseech you, Senhor," said an Andalusian, " alight and taste our wine."

" I thank ye all," answered Las Sierras, anxious to rid himself of his impor-

tunate companions, "but business calls me away."

"Business then must be deferred, Senhor," said a venerable ancient, who appeared to exercise some authority over this suspicious group; "for we have sworn on the hilt of our daggers, and to our Lady of the Mountain, that if we fell in a second time with our generous benefactor, he should not depart till he had joined with us in pledging our safe return from her shrine."

Our hero now felt fairly caught. Resistance was useless against such superior numbers, and though more than half doubting the intentions of his grateful pilgrims, Las Sierras thought the best way was not to justify outrage by a seeming suspicion of it. All the passes of this enchanted wood were defended by their scouts; he, therefore, making a virtue of necessity, and considering daylight was not very far off, determined on

descending

descending and partaking of the courtesy they offered him.

While the pilgrims were at the height of their mirth, Don Juan was struck with the deportment of one of them, a female, who seemed to take no share in what was going on around her. She was an aged woman, of a striking figure and features, and appeared an object both of awe and dislike to her companions, which they tried to conceal under an appearance of contemptuous mirth.

"Come, mother," said one, "leave heavenly contemplations, and wet your withered lips with some of the milk of the aged——"

"I'll none of your wine," replied the sibyl with solemnity, refusing the proffered cordial, "it tastes of blood."

"You see, by her answer, she is *not* employed in heavenly contemplation," added a very ruffianly-looking fellow;

"I doubt

" I doubt not if she is reading the stars it is to tell fortunes."

" Peace! well ye know I am no fortune-teller," replied the woman indignantly, bending her brows, " though, perhaps, I can tell *your* fortunes—if you add to your feast of bread and wine the slaughter of the lamb you meditate."

" No fortune-teller!" roared another, as if determined to drown her voice; " when I remember her well by the title of La Gitana, Queen of a band of gipsies who came from the woods of Bohemia all the way *by land* to Sicily.

In consequence of the failure of any further answer from their antagonist, the coarse raillery of these ignorant wretches subsided into communications among themselves; and these, in their turn yielded to the rapid encroachments of the drowsy god, till the diversified group were all extended beneath his influence

fluence in repose, as hearty and unbroken as that enjoyed by the mistress and the slave, the musicians and dancers, at a Bagdat "AT-HOME," as described by Sir Robert Ker Porter—all but the aged female and Don Juan de las Sierras. Uncertainty almost amounting to feverish restlessness kept *him* awake, and the motives were not very dissimilar that agitated *her*.

As soon as all was still, she removed from the tree against which she had reclined at a little distance from the group, and advancing to Don Juan, with her finger on her lip, beckoned to him, with the other hand, to follow her.

Joyfully he obeyed, and unfastening his horse from the place to which he had tied it, silently led it along, while she, stepping cautiously before him, cleared the mazes of this ancient wood till almost at its outskirts.

Here they were stopped by an obstacle which, though it did not appear in a

human shape, was judged by Las Sierras just as likely to give an alarm fatal to their enterprise. This was one of the watch-dogs we have already mentioned, and the hugest of his species. In his red eyes, there was not a vestige of any other but the frightful sanguinary hue to be discerned: and when he disclosed his two ample rows of teeth, it was impossible to say whether his appearance was most ugly, ragged, or ferocious.

One and the same instant sufficed for Don Juan to expect his attack, and to convince him his apprehensions were unfounded. His aged guide cast her eyes on the dog—what more she did or said was imperceptible to him: but its effect was apparent—for the animal, as if under the influence of a spell, followed her like a lamb; and, instead of an enemy, he found they had acquired a most useful companion and defence on their journey.

The first dawn of morning was just reddening

reddening in the east when Don Juan and his protectress emerged from this truly "horrid shade;" and his companion turning towards him with more dignity than might have been expected from the general appearance of her appointments, said—"I am incapable of cheating you into undeserved praises—weariness of an abandoned crew, who abuse the holiest names to follow up their own nefarious purposes, was a powerful motive united to my desire to serve you, and tempted me to a last exertion. You must promise to let me be your companion to the next resting-place, and something tells me I shall not weary you long."

Don Juan, like a gallant knight, disclaiming all weariness in the society of his kind conductress, took the opportunity now offered to return her his fervent thanks, and to obtain from her a full explanation of what he more than suspected.

On her unfolding the plan of robbery and murder of these ruffians, who only assumed the pilgrim's disguise the better to conceal their real objects, which were blood and plunder, Don Juan said —" I cannot forbear believing, my kind companion, that in some measure I owe to you the defeating of their purpose; yet how *your* single presence could deter them from the execution of it I am at a loss to guess."

The female pilgrim smiled—" Observe," she said, " I did not taste their wine—that does not argue I had not prepared it for them—the potent draught prevailed at the very moment of enterprise. Enough—'twill only give them a sound sleep—such as the murderer's pillow seldom knows. " As well may you ask, Senhor, why that huge beast that now licks my hand with lamb-like mildness, did not shake us to pieces as we passed the precincts of the grove.

But

But the art of charming dogs*, as well as disarming men, is known to some of the mountaineers of the Serrania de Ronda."

"De Ronda!" repeated Don Juan de las Sierras with emotion—"you are then of my native country?"

The pleasure of the acknowledgment was mutual: and the venerable stranger looking with increased interest and confidence at her young companion, intimated to him that she had some communications to make and wishes to express when rest should have somewhat recruited her.

At the first town that promised a tolerable hostelry, Don Juan stopped to allow his guide to refresh herself; for he now perceived by the light of day that she was old and feeble in the extreme, and feared that she had trusted more to

* That such a secret is possessed by some persons is a fact we frequently read of.

her good will than her strength in the last service she had rendered him.

After she had taken some repose, she dragged her feeble limbs to a kind of wooden settle that stood in a small garden of the hostelry, and faced the south. An olive-tree and a vine mixed their branches in a bower over it, and here, after her long and weary wandering, she expressed herself particularly at ease—"I can look towards the point where lies Andalusia," she said, "for Andalusia I never more shall see."

On Don Juan's approaching her with some words of encouragement—"It may not be," she in a still more solemn accent resumed—"the term of my earthly pilgrimage draws to a close, I only prayed my life might be prolonged to accomplish the vow I took to God and the Holy Virgin. My prayers were heard—I die content."

After pausing a moment to recover

breath—

breath—"Senhor," she said, "you journey towards the south. Will you listen to the last wishes of one who did not pause to hazard life and limb to serve you?"

Don Juan hastened to assure her of his eagerness to repay part of the obligation she had conferred on him.

"Then," said the Andalusian, "that you may understand I trouble a noble cavalier with no light or vain request, it is fitting I should be sincere with you, and reveal the motives of my pilgrimage; and to do this a sketch of my short and sad history must be endured.

"In the beginning of life I was proud and happy, as the largest flocks, the bravest husband, and the finest family of children could render me; but goodness is better than riches—my husband and some of my sons, on growing up to manhood, died fighting and defending what I fear was not their right—my

daughters married far away from me—and at length none were left but my youngest—the prettiest maid in the Serrania de Ronda.

"Her beauty caught the attention of Don Alvaro de Solis—the adopted—and only the adopted son of the Duke de Solis—a powerful grandee residing in the neighbourhood. He had brought this young man up carefully, and given him his name, on account of his singular resemblance to a beloved and only son early taken from him by death.

"You may imagine, Senhor, the Duke would not hear of my daughter for Don Alvaro—but the young cavalier protested he would rather give up all future prospect of advancement from his patron than resign her; and, as usual, love and youth prevailed, and they were married without his consent. The Duke dying soon after, shewed the resentment he entertained for Don Alvaro's conduct

by

by leaving him a very trifling legacy. Even to obtain possession of this, it was necessary for him to go to Madrid, and he departed, with many promises to Marcella immediately to return. Months, however, rolled away, and we received no tidings of him, till my daughter, almost distracted, resolved, in spite of my remonstrances, to set out in search of him herself.

"It was the first time I had ever been separated from Marcella. My feeling of loneliness was severe indeed—my only solace was to ascend the highest rock, and, looking out as far as my straining sight could reach, endeavour to change some distant speck into the resemblance of my lost children.

"One day, as I was thus employed, I saw two figures approaching with the swiftness of the wind. They drew near—it was my child, leaning upon the arm of her husband. Don Alvaro had

assumed, and for ever, the garb and rank of a mountain shepherd for love of Marcella, with whom alone he desired to pass the remainder of his days. But of the gloomy interval that had separated him from us, neither he nor Marcella ever spoke. She appeared satisfied, and I was obliged to be so; yet, sometimes, I could not forbear fancying all was not right in her husband's mind, though he had, assuredly, the finest flocks, the most affectionate wife, and the loveliest children in the Serrania de Ronda.

"At length, a dreadful fever broke out in the Serrania and the neighbouring lands of Almarez. Every day beheld the death of some of our people, and soon the first-born of my Marcella's children became its victim. The second was next attacked—and then her youngest infant. At length, none were left but the third, a boy, who from his birth had been the object of my peculiar

care.

care. Alvaro was next summoned, and seemed, from the beginning of his illness, to despair. He called his weeping wife to his bedside, and his dying communication seemed to shoot an icebolt through her heart.

"Marcella never held up her head again; but, finding herself about to join Alvaro, communicated to me the fatal secret his lips had at last disclosed. To make it intelligible, she was obliged to revert to the period that she had gone in search of him at Madrid. She had then found him recovering from a wound he had received in an affair of honour, and he had amused her with an account of legal difficulties that had occasioned his delay; but his last confession told a different tale. Admired for his accomplishments, he had been introduced to the acquaintance of a young lady of rank and beauty, whose superior charms had occasioned in him a temporary forgetful-

ness of Marcella; and, blinded by love and ambition, he had actually trepanned her into a private marriage, ignorant as she was that he was already the husband of another. Their meetings were surprised by her brother; and he was just recovering from the effects of the vengeance of the offended cavalier, when his injured wife had presented herself.

" At the period of Marcella's arrival at Madrid, Alvaro's heart had already begun to turn towards the object of its first affections, and the tender attention of Marcella during the period of his convalescence completed her restoration to his love. He kept from her knowledge the secret of his base conduct, and returned, as I have told you, with her to the Serrania de Ronda. But, in the hour of death and terror, conscience arose with all her serpent stings. The thoughts of the young and innocent lady whom he had betrayed to desertion and ruin

ruin allowed him no repose—and he looked on the destruction of his children as the just retribution for his perfidy. She yet lived, and he communicated her name to Marcella—but, as my daughter was struggling to pronounce it, death sealed her lips, and she was buried with Alvaro in one grave."

Thus had the pilgrim whom Don Juan had long ago discovered to be Ximena, unknowingly given him a full explanation of all that was mournful and mysterious in the early history of his parents. He longed to throw himself at the feet of the bold but virtuous woman who had obtained for his helpless innocence the protection of Donna Rosaura d'Almarez. He, however, postponed the discovery of himself; and, gently leading her back to the subject by expressions of the most heartfelt sympathy, inquired, with as much steadiness of voice and countenance as he could command,

command, the fate of Marcella's only surviving offspring.

"I hurried him from the scene of death," resumed Ximena, "and prayed to God to direct me how I might preserve his precious days. Suddenly a ray of light, as if from heaven, illumined me—it bade me follow to the Castle of Almarez—*there* dwelt a beauteous lady—an unspotted saint, under whose pure care my boy, who had scarcely numbered three summers, might escape the fate of his elder and younger brethren. My resolution was no sooner taken than executed—with the boy in my hand, I hastened to the chapel of the Castle of Almarez, where I found the lovely lady supplicating for the forgiveness of *those* sins in others *her* pure soul could never know.

"Surely God still upheld me, or I never could have found resolution to go through with my tale; yet I did so, and

you

you may judge of the innocence and piety of the spotless saint who heard it, when I tell you, that the bare recital of sins such as I was forced to reveal, affected her with emotions as violent as those with which they had formerly shaken me—*me* whose peace had been the victim of the guilt of others; yet still she accepted the charge—I believe she did, for she was all goodness: but truly now my brain began to turn—the thought of poor Alvaro, whose sins his sufferings had cancelled—of all my lovely innocents lowly laid in the caves of the mountains, arose to my remembrance. In a state of frenzy resembling fever I rushed from the chapel, and never beheld the child I had so fondly loved again."

"And why did you so completely forsake him?" asked Don Juan.

"He was in holier keeping than mine," returned Ximena, "and I was bent on

the

the accomplishment of a vow. The Serrania was become odious to me, and I left it to traverse the different provinces of Spain, visiting the shrines of the saints at every place I passed through, and praying for the welfare of the only descendant the wrath of Heaven had spared; and this was, night and morn, my ardent prayer for him, *that if, snatched from the heavy judgment inflicted by Heaven on his kindred, my little Juan should be preserved to maturity, he might ever keep his plighted faith inviolate once pledged to man or woman.*"

Don Juan sighed heavily, and an exclamation burst unconsciously from his lips.

"Did you not speak, Senhor?" inquired the aged wanderer; "either my senses deceive me, or you just uttered something purporting that my prayer was not heard."

"No, no—proceed," Don Juan replied.

Ximena

Ximena then hastily sketched the remainder of her life. Not content with visiting all the holy places in Spain, she had made her way to Rome—had been to the celebrated shrine of St. Rosalia in Sicily, and visited many other other noted places.

"The pilgrimages of the poor," she continued, "are not accomplished with the rapid facility of the gay and prosperous voyages of the rich. I suffered many things by sea and land, and in delays and hardships years passed away, till at length, when I could have returned home, I was deterred by the dread of the desolation there.

"At length, feeling a wish to come home and die, I returned to Spain. Accident induced me to join company with those pilgrims, who appeared to me at first on a quest pious as my own, and who professed to be travelling towards Andalusia like myself. They soon unveiled

veiled their true characters; but being unwillingly in possession of some of their secrets, I was watched, and could not escape from them—the knowledge of your danger was an additional incitement to me to attempt my liberty. You interested me, Senhor, and inspired me with a feeling I never thought to experience again for any human being. I have saved you—I have escaped those demons—and now the will of God be done, for I feel that *this* is the termination of my journey, and that Ximena shall never visit, in the body, the places where the bodies of her children repose. But you, Senhor, are proceeding onwards—search out Fra Agostino in the mountains—tell him that Ximena accomplished all she intended in her pilgrimage; and give him," she continued, pulling relics from her bosom, "these tokens that I have really visited the places I engaged to visit."

Don

Don Juan promised religiously to obey all these directions; and had now leisure to turn in his mind the best manner of discovering himself to Ximena.—"It is not always in our power to do what we would," he observed; "and next to that, *they* are happiest who have the greatest number of services to reflect on done to their fellow-creatures. My history is much like that of your orphan boy, Ximena. A native of the Serrania, I was early confided to the generous care of a lady who lived beyond it."

The aged woman looked at him, as if this exordium only confirmed a confused presentiment that had already arisen in her bosom.

"Think," resumed Don Juan, "what would be your satisfaction, if, in preserving their general for the Serranos, you had saved the life of your Marcella's son."

Ximena

Ximena heard no more, but falling on his neck, sobbed out—" My affection did not deceive me—my eyes will be closed by a child of my Marcella's! And is this, indeed, the child that I snatched, almost hopeless, from destruction?" she exclaimed, as, growing calmer, she scrutinized, with minute and fond attention, the matured form of the graceful and manly youth, whom she had left almost an infant, and who was restored to be the support of her extreme old age.

" It is indeed," returned Don Juan, smiling affectionately on her, " and a guerilla in heart as much as if he had never left his native mountains. Their air will revive you, mother, and you shall see what your son can do when supported by the esteem of his countrymen, who have honoured him with the command against their invaders."

" Never!" replied Ximena, in a hollow

low voice, and looking on him with a melancholy gaze.

In fact, extreme age and hardships alike contributed to make the present scene the termination of her wanderings. Of this she was perfectly sensible; and it was the cause of her opening her heart to Don Juan in the manner which terminated in making them known to each other.

The following evening Ximena felt the rapid approaches of death; and the short time that remained to her, she devoted to religion, and enforcing a few precepts to her survivor. The principal one, and one that she repeated at every interval that her failing breath permitted, was—"Above all things, be faithful to your promise. Let neither profit nor pleasure tempt you to break your plighted word. Oh, Juan! the forfeit of perjury hangs on your house—redeem—redeem it!"

Don

Don Juan shuddered, while he promised to obey.

It was repeating these words that Ximena expired in the arms of her descendant.

Sad and soul-piercing were the meditations that occupied Don Juan the night he passed in the chamber of death. This awful scene, the first of the kind he had ever witnessed, seemed to rend away the thin delusions with which he had, up to this period, satisfied his conscience. His conduct appeared to him in its true light; but what did not that light let in? He saw—for it was impossible any longer to palliate or disguise to himself the nature of his feelings—that, while engaged by every tie of honour and humanity to Constantina, he was in love to madness with Donna Louisa d'Almarez. Madness it might be termed in every sense, for she was a consecrated vestal; and even could he suppose

suppose it possible for her to become free, all the noble youth of Spain might then contend for her hand.

"And why," he asked himself, "should I wish to possess it? were she even loosed from religious bonds, and (distracting, tempting thought!) not indifferent to me, is there not a *third* reason," whispered conscience, "that forbids me ever to aspire to her?"—"True; but," argued sophistry, "what duty engaged me originally to Constantina? Did not my benefactor frown on my passion? was it not marked with the characters of mystery and disobedience?"

It was so—fond vain arguer! There surely *was* a time when your resignation of the maid would have been an act of virtuous self-denial. But *that* time is gone for ever. *Now*, self-denial must be exercised on another ground. Your youthful folly must be your punishment. Where you looked for rapture, you

must

must seek content. Honour has indissolubly entwined your fate with Constantina's—you are no longer a free agent; and, however your own heart may change towards her, have no right to destroy the happiness of a confiding being, of which you voluntarily constituted yourself sole arbiter.

Such were the reflections that the silence of night suggested to the distracted mind of Don Juan, while bitterly bewailing the effervescence of youthful passion, which had led him to mistake novelty, and the natural admiration inspired by a lovely young woman, for the feelings that were to constitute the happiness of his life. With *him* love was not a passion to be trifled with—for the first time he felt it, in all its charms and agonies. *Now* was the hour arrived, predicted by the holy friend who knew him best, that a woman would have power to seal his fate with happiness

ness or misery, and from *that* woman he was for ever separated.

Compared to what he felt for Louisa, his partiality for Constantina was so faint as to be almost already extinguished. Donna Louisa d'Almarez *alone* realized his ideal vision of feminine perfection—that unseen charm, to which he had, unconsciously, from his earliest years habituated himself, by the contemplation of the various graces that adorned Donna Rosaura. Had he seen Louisa *first*, his thoughts would never have strayed to another, but now!—— There was a resemblance between his own and his father's story that terrified him.

"Wretch that I am!" he exclaimed, "I am incapable of even wishing to be virtuous! The leaven of my parent's guilt and ingratitude ferments in my blood, and forbids me to surpass him!" Then, the next moment, bitterly repent-

ing of this mental impiety, he flung himself on his knees beside the corpse of Ximena, and implored of Heaven to direct and strengthen him.

"*Break not your plighted word!*" he mechanically repeated to himself—her last awful injunction. "*She* died," he said, "seeking to expiate the perjured guilt of others—and I——" His mind was in too distracted a state—it was in vain he tried to pray—the conflict of the passions was at its height, and how could the "still small voice" be heard?

At length he took out a rosary—it was *that* given him in their last interview by Donna Louisa.—"At least I may *thus* remember her," he said; "in orisons to Heaven for her felicity I may recall the lovely giver, and——" But the native integrity of his mind rejected the delusive sophistry. He restored the treasured gift to its place of safety, nor durst profane the symbol of religion with the impassioned sigh of love.

Morning

Morning dawned, and found him sunk in a stupor rather than sleep, occasioned by the exhaustion of feelings overstrained.

The customs of foreign countries not permitting that long delay observed in ours before we take our last leave of the dead, Don Juan was able, after paying these sad duties to his maternal relative, to proceed on his melancholy journey.

He endeavoured to rouse his thoughts from the unmanly lethargy into which they had fallen, by representing to himself the importance of the public interests he was about to guide, and the nature of the welcome he might expect in the Serrania.

But here the image of *another* who might await him presented itself, unbidden, to his fancy. The feeling was distressing, but he had learned to school his emotions, and determined, at whatever sacrifice of his maturer judgment's

more decided choice, to fulfil all that could be demanded of him by duty and Constantina.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

———————Hark! the note,
The natural music of the mountain reed—
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal air,
Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes—oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Manfred.

ARRIVED in the Serrania de Ronda, Don Juan de las Sierras found the greatest confusion and distraction reigning throughout the mountains. Old men,

 women,

women, and children, were flying in different directions, seeking security in their inaccessible fastnesses, or burying their most precious effects in holes and caverns.

Several men were employed cutting branches of olive-trees with their hatchets—others were looking for arms they had concealed among the rocks or buried in the ground; while nothing was heard or seen on all sides but threats and menacing gestures, which the native vivacity of the Andalusians rendered peculiarly impressive.

The reason of this was soon explained. The French had entered Ronda, the capital of the whole Serrania. Joseph Napoleon had garrisoned it with two hundred and fifty hussars, commanded by a colonel, with powers extending as far as twenty leagues in every direction. But the Serraños had, as yet, successfully struggled to confine the virtual exercise

of

of this authority within the narrow boundaries of Ronda.

Don Juan de las Sierras found, as often proves the case, that the evil he had vainly apprehended did not threaten him, while other and more serious perils did.

The dreaded interview with Constantina was unavoidably postponed by her own and her brother's prolonged absence. El Sombrero, after collecting considerable contributions among the different villages of the mountains, under pretext of purchasing a further supply of arms and ammunition, departed, and had been heard of no more.

Under such circumstances, the return of Don Juan de las Sierras, the most beloved of their chiefs, was hailed with transport amounting to enthusiasm; and all the inhabitants of the Serrania united in expressing to him the determination which animated them to do every thing

rather than submit to the yoke with which they were threatened. Those of the Serranos that were not in the villages to defend them, were, while affecting to pursue their daily occupations, in reality erecting some rampart or defence against the enemy.

"I am cutting down these branches," said a peasant whom Don Juan had observed among the olive-trees, "to block up the entrance of this defile."

"Father," said a little urchin, who ran in among the animated group, "see what the fine French gentleman gave me for shewing him the way!"

"From a Frenchman!" exclaimed his mother, dashing the piece of gold upon the ground with a spirit worthy of a Spartan dame; "I would rather you had touched burning embers!"

"Oh, mother! do not you fear me," returned the boy, laughing; "he is safe among our own caverns instead of being

on

on the right way to Rónda—and when I had lodged him there, I ran off, tossing my cap, and crying with all my might —'Viva el Rey Fernando!'"

"Ay, there let him remain till evening," cried several voices, "when his blood shall expiate the death of our brave countrymen."

As they spoke, a party of the Serranos returned, laden with the spoils of the neighbouring plain. These Serranos considered the Spaniards who had not declared against the French as much their enemies as the invaders; and made no scruple of carrying off their cattle to supply the wants of the patriots.

The heart of Don Juan was oppressed and divided.—"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "shall I never escape from the cry of revenge and blood? Children in the age of innocence already taught the lesson of cruelty and deceit!"

He tried to divert his countrymen from their sanguinary intentions respecting the stranger lured by the child into their hands; and, more fortunate than in the Guadarramma Mountains, obtained from them a promise to spare his life, on condition of immediately assuming over them the sole command, left vacant by the departure of Gonsalez and the mysterious Valencian.

The next morning, Don Juan was awakened by the sound of the reveillé arousing the garrison of Ronda; while the French trumpets were echoed by the shepherd's horn, heard from the summits of the surrounding hills, and serving in the place of a more warlike instrument to summon the less disciplined, but not less brave Serranos to arms.

This adaptation of the rude resources of pastoral life to the military exigencies of the times, would, to a romantic mind,

have

have not been without its charm, had it been possible to attend to other objects while beholding the struggles of a virtuous and united people in the defence of their expiring freedom. Devoid of uniform to distinguish them, or any other military pomp whatsoever; still wearing the cap, the sandals, and the rustic attire, that denoted their pastoral occupation, the Serranos proved in repeated rencounters,

"The might that slumbers in a peasant's arm,"

and the devotion to the sacred cause which animated every breast, from the humblest shepherd to the heroic Don Juan de las Sierras.

All the gorges and passes of the mountains were occupied by Don Juan's Serranos, and the cruel decrees of Marshal Soult, which, if executed in their fullest extent, would have ended in making the

 country

country a desert, by preventing all hope of accommodation, kept up, to the highest pitch, the spirit of the patriot warriors.

A convoy of cartridges, which Don Juan had the good fortune to intercept, was of great advantage to the mountaineers, reduced to the last distress by the mysterious disappearance of El Sombrero; and Las Sierras was encouraged to persevere in his plan of hostilities, which terminated in driving the French garrison out of Ronda.

The day of their entrance into Ronda was a day of triumph to the Serranese. So hasty had been the retreat of the enemy, that they left baggage of every description behind them; and this the Serranos seemed to think their fair reward.

In vain their General, Las Sierras, endeavoured to put a stop to the pillage: and, to do the fair sex justice, it must be

be confessed the ladies were the most busy in loading their mules with every article they could carry away. Night came, and many parties that had entered the town at daybreak, returned in irregular order to the villages that were their home.

Don Juan de las Sierras took up his quarters within the town, and when the last summons had called every straggler to his quarters, the young General endeavoured to snatch a few moments of repose, before the arduous duties of the morrow roused him to action again.

Scarcely had he lain down, when he was startled by a knocking at the outer gate of the hotel where he had taken up his lodging, and the heavy step of the sentinel that paced up and down before it was now lost in the loud altercation of his voice, mingled with that of another man, entreating, threatening, imploring, as if his life depended upon the other's compliance.

Don

Don Juan advanced to the casement, and, by the light of the moon, saw a Frenchman pulling at the doorposts like the picture of Orson in his first approach to an inhabited castle, or that affrighted knight, Sir Trevesian, in Spenser's Fairy Queen.

Secure from the apprehension of treachery from the frightened and miserable appearance of the man, Don Juan de las Sierras ordered him to be admitted; which order was no sooner complied with, than the Frenchman, throwing himself at his feet and clasping his knees, exclaimed—" Ah, M. le Général, preserve a life again, that has been already once saved by your magnanimity !"

" I know not what you mean," said Don Juan.

" Helas ! monseigneur, I am the unhappy man you prevailed upon the savage Serranos to spare when one of their little children—little imps rather—had almost lured me to destruction. But what

what will that avail if they are now determined to have my life?"

"Your life is safe here," said Don Juan; "who and what are you?"

"Helas! monsieur, je suis un pauvre artiste—they call me a drogueman, and say I interpret for the enemy—but I am no drogueman, though my facility in learning languages assuredly equals my excellence in every other accomplishment. My art, which I had studied on the purest principles of taste, had acquired me the most deserved celebrity at Paris—the only place in the world for rewarding and distinguishing merit. Painting, statuary, the drama, have all had reason to acknowledge their obligations to me. David could not have draped his figures, nor Talma obtained universal admiration for the grace of his attitudes, if I had not furnished them with the aid of picturesque embellishments. The Grand Duke of

Berg,

Berg, Marshal Soult, all but Marshal Ney, esteemed my talents. Love of the arts, and a desire to extend the boundaries of useful knowledge, led me to renounce all the pleasures and glories that surrounded me, and impart to the army the advantage of my talents in the land of the ancient Iberians—and now ——"

Here the harangue of the artist was interrupted by the unceremonious entrance of one of the Serranos, who, followed by two or three other wild and fierce looking figures, demanded that the Frenchman, as a spy and an interpreter, should be delivered into their hands.

The terrified Frenchman clung to the knees of Don Juan de las Sierras—he howled, he screamed, he implored for mercy.

"Have you no pity?" exclaimed Las Sierras—"what do you expect your own

end

end to be if you massacre this man in cold blood? He is an artist—a man of talents and genius, and——"

"He is a tailor!" exclaimed the elder, indignantly—"Aiguillette, the dastardly French tailor, whom we spared once at your excellency's instances, and whom we discovered, since our occupation of the town, lurking in disguise to attempt to corrupt our people."

"Be he what he may," interrupted Las Sierras, "if you violate the sanctity of this roof——"

"We will not," exclaimed several voices—"away with him!"

"Ah, M. le Général," exclaimed the struggling Frenchman, "pour l'amour de Dieu ayez pitié de moi!"

But Las Sierras was powerless to check the tide of passion in its fierce uproar, and the desire of retaliation raised to fury by having been for a short time suspended. They hurried him from the presence

presence of the commander, whose looks and words were a reproach to their barbarity; and a heavy plunge, succeeded by the sullen roll of the waters of the river Guadiaro, alone announced the fate of the ingenious but somewhat vainglorious citizen.*

Morning returned, and with it the exultation of the conquerors and the diligence of the ladies. Though unused to any sort of luxury, the wives of the mountaineers seemed to annex a great idea of consequence to the notion of coming and living among townspeople. —" I will take this house," said a sunburnt gipsy, stepping before one of the finest in the place, " and come in a few days to inhabit it with my goats and my family. I'll learn the use of all the fine things the French have left behind, and live like a lady for the future."

" Indeed!" said Don Juan, trying to smile,

' Historique.

smile; though many considerations saddened him at heart. "And tell me, Xaviera, thy notion of living like a lady?"

"Why my walls shall be hung with all these fine things," said she, shewing a miscellaneous collection of housings, carpets, curtains, and prints, that she had obtained for her part of the plunder —"and I'll learn to read, and keep a boy to milk my goats, and a girl to sing me to sleep: and never wrestle or go to a kurling match except upon holidays— and try to get my husband and sons to give up the smuggling trade."

In the midst of this wild exultation the cares of Don Juan were increasing upon him. He saw it was impossible to keep long possession of Ronda, and doubted his own influence over the mountaineers to turn their present success to the best advantage.

The reverse of those selfish minds

who

who would rather endanger the welfare of those confided to them than share the glory with another, Don Juan de las Sierras would willingly have waved his private objections to the character of Gonsalez to be restored to the benefit of his counsels. In the mean time he was hailed as the destined liberator of his countrymen; and the final destruction of the enemy was prognosticated as an event at no great distance.

END OF VOL. II.

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